

Paranoia in Postmodern American Literature

Duncan Stuart Beard

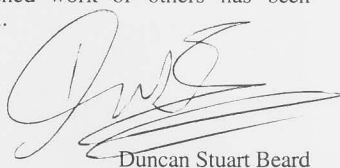
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I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D. Beard', with a long, horizontal, wavy line extending from the bottom of the signature.

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Introduction

Paranoia in Postmodern American Literature

Though this be madness, yet there is method in't.
William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

During much of the twentieth-century, paranoia has been theorised, written and thought about from a particularly asocial foundation. Medicalised, pathologised, and diagnosed as an individual malady, paranoia has been seen as having little direct reference to the operations of society (apart from the potential danger to others that the paranoiac may pose due to his 'abnormal' state). Most concerned individuals considered paranoia to be an individual malady, an illness whose bizarre belief systems were limited in importance to the delusional inner mind of the paranoiac himself or herself, and so a phenomenon with little or no significance to the way in which socially located individuals and groups operate on a daily basis.

There are, of course, some notable exceptions to this statement. The writings of historian Norman Cohn, for example, in particular his work *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, which deals with the anti-Semitic paranoia prominent in various forms throughout the Middle Ages, have been notable in dealing with the phenomenon of mass paranoia head on, and from an overtly social perspective. A few other exceptional figures, such as R.D. Laing, Thomas Szasz, David Cooper, and other proponents of the (loosely associated) anti-psychiatry movement, chose to focus their attention upon the social construction of 'mental illness'. But, in the cases of both Norman Cohn and the anti-psychiatry movement, the social redefinition of 'mental illness' was initially received with a great deal of controversy.¹ Despite these attempts to socialise our understanding of 'mental illness', the popular view of paranoia as a distinctly asocial, ahistorical individual malady persisted.

¹ Cohn's introductory statements to *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, outlining his belief that the sort of mass paranoia witnessed in his accounts of the demonisation and persecution of Jews in the Middle Ages evidenced the fact that, "in the history of social behaviour there certainly are some patterns which in their main outlines recur again and again, revealing as they do so similarities which become ever more recognisable" (Cohn 1970 c1957, pxiv) raised such widespread criticism that he removed them from future editions of the text. Cohn's blurring of the lines of individual psychology and contemporary conceptualisations of social behaviour was seen as threatening by many academics. Psychology is one thing, sociology is another, the criticism ran; and history was presumably seen as being as something else altogether, given the implicated emphasis upon the necessity for the purity of distinct academic disciplines. The arguments of the anti-psychiatry movement were greeted with a similar negativity by the great majority of the psychiatric community, either with the aggressive scorn typical of those whose very profession has been challenged, or simply ignored.

But now we are said to live in the postmodern era. Increasingly, more and more people are willing to subscribe to the idea that, to put it crudely, 'everything is a social construction': that the 'truth' of any discourse is largely defined by reference to the normative foundations erected upon the continually shifting soil of a socio-cultural and historical terrain. The relatively recent popularity of such works as Foucault's *Madness and Civilisation* and Deleuze's and Guattari's two *Anti-Oedipus* works, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, has been further responsible for disseminating the idea that the notion of 'mental illness' is largely determined by social, historical and cultural forces. With the benefit of hindsight, one can see that the works of both Cohn and the anti-psychiatrist movement ^{might} ~~may~~ have played a somewhat pivotal part in a transformation of the way in which 'mental illness' is constructed in the late-twentieth-century. Their underlying insistence upon working across disciplinary boundaries, their desire not only to socialise 'mental illness' but also to politicise (and, at times, radicalise) thinking about the concept of 'madness' has created some important long-term changes in the way in which we think about paranoia.

Whilst a contemporary vernacular understanding of the term 'paranoia' does, at times, come remarkably close to a clinical comprehension of it, the ad hoc application of the label 'paranoid' to any person exhibiting an 'unnatural' degree of suspiciousness threatens to broaden its definition to the extent that it no longer has any determinate meaning. Certain writers have attempted to escape from the vernacular/clinical confusion by opting to define their use of the term 'paranoia' as primarily metaphorical. Richard Hofstadter's influential essay 'The Paranoid Style in American Politics', for example, is particular in stating: "In using the expression 'paranoid style', I am not speaking in a clinical sense, but borrowing a clinical term for other purposes" (Hofstadter 1965, p3); ^{his} ~~His~~ argument being that American politics has shown a particular propensity toward a 'paranoid style' of expression, Hofstadter writes:

It is the use of paranoid modes of expression by more or less normal people that makes the phenomenon significant. When I speak of the paranoid style, I use the term much as a historian of art might speak of the baroque or the mannerist style. It is, above all, a way of seeing the world and of expressing oneself.
(Hofstadter 1965, p4)

Despite the apparent politicisation of paranoia that occurs in Hofstadter's essay, ostensibly due to the social and historical contexts that he lends to a particular understanding of 'paranoia', he still expresses the desire to insist upon the fundamental distinction between the psychiatric disciplines and the study of history and politics. This distinction between 'actual' (clinically defined) paranoia and the (metaphorically significant) 'paranoid style' would seem to equate to a distinction between form and content; American politics articulates rhetorical strategies that are paranoid in style, one might say, but not in content. Hofstadter does, however, follow Webster's *clinical* definition of paranoia in order to define his understanding of the 'paranoid style' (Hofstadter 1965, p4). His further analyses of the

'paranoid style' continually draw upon a psychiatric understanding of the term in order to comprehend its motivating factors, utilising such concepts as projection² at the same time as he is concerned with "the possibility of using political rhetoric to get at political pathology" (Hofstadter 1965, p6). The great bulk of Hofstadter's essay, in fact, points to social and political causes, not for the 'paranoid style', but for the paranoid *beliefs* that underlie certain paranoid forms of expression. Hofstadter's belief in the existence of a fundamental distinction between paranoid style and paranoid content is rather unstable at best.

Hofstadter ultimately convinces himself that what he is studying has nothing to do with 'real' paranoia by stating: "It is the use of paranoid modes of expression by more or less *normal* people that makes the phenomenon significant" (Hofstadter 1965, p4—my emphasis). Here Hofstadter relies upon a rather conventional conception of the dichotomous opposition between 'normal' people and 'madmen', an unbridgeable chasm between the realms of the 'sane' and the 'insane'. 'Normal' people, Hofstadter surmises, are not paranoid because paranoia is not normal. In a sense, Hofstadter is correct, paranoia is generally defined by virtue of its abnormality. If 'normal' people were considered to be 'paranoid', then neither term would continue to hold any meaning.³ However, the act of questioning this sanity/insanity, normality/deviancy ^{binary opposition} ~~dichotomy~~ undermines its supposed status as absolute, leading one to take the view that these concepts are defined according to the varied and varying norms that exist within distinct social organisms. As Fried and Agassi write: "A person may be classed as a paranoiac for holding a cranky view, but not if he belongs to a community in which that view is institutionalised" (Fried 1976, p20). The fear of communist invasion, for example, was not defined as necessarily paranoid in the United States of America during the McCarthy era, yet it would most certainly be considered so today. To put it crudely, what is considered 'paranoid' in a particular period of history and in a particular socio-cultural location may not be considered paranoid in a different time or place. Paranoia should not be considered an 'absolute' malady, immune from messy socio-cultural concerns. A recognition of the contingency of paranoia has led many writers not only to reject the dichotomous view, but to formulate a new way of viewing the distinctions between paranoia and sanity. As Peter Chadwick writes:

The dichotomous view, i.e. that a person either has delusions and hallucinations or does not (rather as a woman is either pregnant or not), has been quashed by Strauss (1969), Chapman and Chapman (1980), and Chapman et al. (1982).... Paranoid processes are on a continuum with daily human functioning; paranoid mechanisms are utilised by everyone.
(Chadwick 1992, p82)

² See particularly (Hofstadter 1965, p322).

³ It is in this sense that the categories of madness and sanity might be said to be dependent upon each other. For the concept of sanity cannot exist without its dark other, just as the concept of truth would be meaningless without the idea of falsity; light without dark, man without woman, up without down, and so on.

When the two poles of 'sanity' and 'insanity' are viewed in a less oppositional fashion, as more akin to socially constructed concepts that are the extreme ends of a spectrum of sanity, one begins to view paranoia as being a mental process or set of practices that anyone may utilise at a given time, the outcome being an extra-normative, 'paranoid' belief system.

Since around the mid to late 1960s, such interrogations of the problematic nature of 'madness' have come to occupy a point of focused debate within certain 'postmodern' academic circles. The most noticeable vein has occurred within certain Continental schools of 'critical theory' (if I may attach such a convenient, yet necessarily insufficient epithet to what in actuality encompasses a wide range of methodological approaches and conceptual concerns) and others that those schools' modes of operation have strongly influenced.⁴ As Shoshana Felman writes⁵:

The significance of madness as a crucial question in the current cultural scene is well known. Not only has madness preoccupied many different disciplines but it has *caused them to converge*, thus *subverting their boundaries*. Sociology and philosophy, linguistics and literature, history and psychology, and of course psychoanalysis and psychiatry have all scrutinised madness and have themselves been put in question by this very scrutiny.... Admittedly, we are experiencing today an inflation in discourses on madness.
(Felman 1985, p12-13)

Whilst I have read widely from this field of inquiry (and hence its influence in this work is, in a certain sense, inescapable), it is not my primary intention to contribute to this field of endeavour. Despite the many differences that exist between individual works, the Continental school of critical theory can be said to have originated from a relatively common set of philosophical, literary and psychoanalytical preconceptions. Freud would undoubtedly loom large as a foundational element of this cultural milieu; through the writings of Lacan in particular, his work would assume a particular genealogical importance that would be difficult to translate to the outsider. Similarly, writers such as Proust, Balzac, Flaubert, and Baudelaire; philosophers as diverse as Nietzsche and Pascal; linguists such as Ferdinand de Saussure; and anthropologists such as Levi-Strauss are all part of a ~~coherent~~^{an} intellectual heritage whose formative impact upon the late-twentieth-

⁴ I am thinking in particular about what has come to be known as the 'Yale school' or the 'American deconstructionists', a loosely affiliated group of American critical theorists whose works exhibit an engagement with contemporary Continental critical/theoretical practices. The idea that this work emanates from a cultural heritage that is particular to Continental intellectuals (see below) is still born out by the broad general differences in approach that mark the works of Continental theorists and the Yale school. The fact that many 'deconstructionist' and 'post-structuralist' practices were introduced to the broader American intellectual community through the intermediary works of Jonathon Culler, in turn giving American audiences an idiosyncratic variety of understandings of these strategies, might here be noted. See particularly (Culler 1975), (Culler 1981), (Culler 1982).

⁵ Here it is important to note that Felman's work was originally written in French, that portions of it were previously published in Yale French Studies, and that it focuses upon the work of such figures as Derrida and Foucault, Flaubert and Balzac, Lacan and Freud.

century Continental intellectual psyche has been undeniable. The subtle richnesses with which the works of such figures has imbued the thought of the Continental intellectual is, in a certain sense, somewhat dependent upon an almost intuitive understanding of certain interpretations and particular approaches to these key figures. A comprehensive understanding of this field is also dependent upon an easy understanding of the resonances between contemporary writers' and their intellectual predecessors' work.

This said, my own intellectual heritage must be said to lie in a somewhat different direction. I am certain of the fact that the ways in which I read, interpret, and utilise the works of these writers are often quite different in spirit from the way in which many others understand them. This is not to say that I have in any way ignored the numerous Continental (and Continental influenced) works on the subject. On the contrary, the widespread dissemination of contemporary 'Theory' has rendered the possibility of ignoring its influence undesirable, if not completely untenable. However, such works have been taken with the understanding that their primary importance, with regard to this thesis at least, lies in the possibility of their illuminating readings of the phenomenon of paranoia and its relation to postmodern American fiction. In *Paranoia in Postmodern American Fiction*, my aim is less to bring the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of postmodern American fiction to bear upon contemporary debates in the field of 'Theory' than to bring postmodern American fiction and relevant contemporary discourses of and about paranoia to bear upon each other.

Literature has often shown a peculiarly intimate engagement with the concept of madness, from the Romantic valorisation of the genius of madness, to the recurrent theme of madness as a revolutionary form of radical freedom or self-revelation (present in one form or another from Miguel Cervantes's *Don Quijote* to Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*)⁶ to Shakespeare's provocative representations of the particular brands of madness of characters such as Hamlet, Ophelia, Lady Macbeth, and King Lear. On more than one occasion it has been argued that writers of fiction, due to the nature of their vocation, are particularly susceptible to the sway of insanity. Public interest in iconic literary figures as diverse as Arthur Rimbaud and Sylvia Plath, Ernest Hemingway and Antoine Artaud, Edgar Allen Poe and Franz Kafka, Henry James and Jean-Jacques Rousseau has been marked by a vicarious interest in their private insanities. These figures have, on occasion, been better known for their 'madness' than for their actual works. In the late-eighteenth-century, novels themselves were believed to threaten their predominantly female readership with the possibility of deranging the senses.⁶

⁶ As Foucault writes of these attitudes, "The novel constitutes the milieu of perversion, *par excellence*, of all sensibility; it detaches the soul from all that is immediate and natural in feeling and leads it into

Postmodern American fiction has come to articulate a peculiar engagement with the concept of madness, in particular with the form of insanity that is perhaps most characteristic of the late-twentieth-century: paranoia. The hermeneutic nature of paranoia, the epistemological questions that it poses, and its complication of a broad range of issues concerning interpretation and representation make it an ideal subject not only for the critical gaze of the literary critic, but also for the particular brand of expression afforded by postmodern literature. This literature is often motivated by a recognition of the increasingly pressing need to examine the place of paranoia in contemporary American social life. As well as Continental Theory's ongoing engagement with the concept of madness, there is a recent American drive to look at the social mechanisms of contemporary paranoia as expressed by the prevalence of phenomena such as 'conspiracy theory'. While even the briefest survey of the plethora of recently published 'conspiratorial' texts will attest to a paranoia explosion of mammoth proportions, there has also been a proliferation of works directed toward a more academic audience. Works such as Elaine Showalter's *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture*, Robins' and Posts' *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred*, Jodi Dean's *Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures From Outerspace to Cyberspace*, and anthologies such as *Paranoia Within Reason: A Casebook on Conspiracy as Explanation* and *Even Paranoids Have Enemies: New Perspectives on Paranoia and Persecution* all aim to shed light on the ascendancy of contemporary paranoia, particularly regarding its social, political, and historical causes, functions, and consequences.⁷ Despite radical differences in style and content, this American work as a whole differs from the engagements with the concept of 'madness' performed by Continental Theory (largely inspired by Foucault's *Madness and Civilisation*) in a very basic way. Whereas Foucault defines 'madness' as a lack of production of discourse and describes this 'silence' of madness as belonging to a form of 'unreason',⁸ paranoia is here defined as the very opposite: the flurried production of an almost infinite variety of multifariously over-reasoned and over-rational (in this sense, positively 'irrational' rather than a negative form of 'unreason') discourses about the world.

an imaginary world of sentiments violent in proportion to their unreality, and less controlled by the gentle laws of nature" (Foucault 1988 c1961, p219).

⁷ See (Showalter 1997), (Robins 1997), (Dean 1998), (Marcus 1999), and (Berke 1998).

⁸ In the preface to *Madness and Civilisation*, Foucault states his intention as being to write the archaeology of the 'silence' of madness: "the constitution of mental illness, at the end of the eighteenth century, affords the evidence of a broken dialogue ... The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue of reason about madness, has been established only on the basis of such a silence. I have not tried to write the history of that language, but rather the archaeology of that silence" (Foucault 1988 c1961, px-xi). Foucault writes of the conceptual construction of 'madness' as being, "a whole range of unreason ... reduced to silence.... There is only one word which summarises this experience, *Unreason*: ... all that is constantly in retreat from reason, in the inaccessible domain of nothingness" (Foucault 1988 c1961, pp 78, 107).

It is here that the postmodern American novel most forcefully comes to bear on the subject of paranoia. Whilst there is a consistent engagement with the epistemological and hermeneutic elements of paranoia in a great deal of postmodern literature, this engagement is usually directed toward an enlightenment of its social aspects. As well as taking an interest in the 'paranoid style' of expression, postmodern American literature has shown a fascination for the substantive 'content' of paranoia's engagement with the social field. It is in this sense that postmodern fiction might be said to most clearly exemplify a manifestation of the loss of distinction between the realms of 'literature' and 'theory', for the postmodern American novel self-consciously presents a distinctly investigative and interrogatory stance towards the subject of paranoia. This is where, most properly, the analyses that this thesis presents have centred. As stated earlier, it is the aim of this thesis to bring postmodern American literature and relevant secondary sources of information (as varied and diverse as possible, but always with an eye to their relevance to the literature at hand) to bear upon one another as productively as possible. Despite this methodological desire for mutual enlightenment, prominence of place has been given to explication and elucidative analysis of the literature itself. Where this thesis most obviously departs from the phenomena that the literature itself articulates is in exploring, explicating, and elucidating upon the various contexts in which these works arise.

This is not to presume any sort of unconscious genealogical significance in these works, for postmodern fiction is nothing if not self-conscious in its operations. This said, a recognition of the impact of the particular social, political, historical, cultural, philosophical and aesthetic contexts (not that these can be distinguished conceptually as easily as they are semantically) upon close readings of literary works often necessitates a certain amount of detailed explication. Yet even these so-called 'departures' from 'pure' literary analysis could not be said to depart from the *intentions* of postmodern American literature's engagement with the subject of paranoia. For the investigations of paranoia that take place in postmodern American novels, despite whatever differences may be shown to arise between individual works, are conclusively united in their portrayal of paranoia as constituting a response to environmental influences, whether this takes the form of a reaction to social and psychological pressures or as a reply to the political, cultural and historical developments of the late-twentieth-century. An investigation of these 'external' factors is therefore a conceptual necessity.

Whilst the literature to be studied here has, quite naturally, been chosen because of its dialogue with the subject of paranoia, there are other factors that have influenced the choice of works for interrogation. The novels of Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, and William S. Burroughs have been a perfect choice for prime position in this thesis, not only

because they often demonstrate an unbridled fascination with the concept of paranoia (it is perhaps because of this that their work itself has been labelled 'paranoid' on more than one occasion), but also because they have been recognised by the wider critical community as conceptually and stylistically substantial and, hence, as having a certain key significance with regard to the continuing development of contemporary American literature. Despite the many distinctions and contrasts that exist between these authors and their individual works, the span of their oeuvres can often display a startling amount of conceptual cohesion and continuity. The works of Burroughs, DeLillo, and Pynchon are also particularly noteworthy in that they constitute a point of ongoing concern. While I have been writing this thesis, both DeLillo and Pynchon have published new works, and William S. Burroughs has died. As critical and analytical texts about their works continue to flourish, it is more than likely that both DeLillo and Pynchon will publish new works some time in the near future. Despite the death of Burroughs, in August 1997, it would be no great surprise to see a previously unpublished manuscript bearing his name appear on bookstore shelves along with the many appreciative and critical works that constitute an ongoing reappraisal of his work. The continuing popularity of these authors, both within academic circles and with general readers of fiction, is testament not only to their status as skilful literary craftsmen but also to the viability of a contemporary vein of literature that critically engages with the world through the utilisation of fictional modes of expression. In this respect, the works of Pynchon, Burroughs, and DeLillo may be seen as an integral part of a vein of fictional literature dominated first and foremost by its critical engagement with issues of current and ongoing social significance. This element has also dominated the choices of secondary sources of literature. Whilst it has been my desire to include as diverse a range of secondary sources of information as is possible, given the motivation of this thesis, the choice of literary texts has been largely constrained to postmodern American novels that demonstrate a critical engagement with issues related to paranoia. Thus reference is occasionally made to the works of such 'postmodern' authors as Norman Mailer, Robert Stone, Kathy Acker, William Gaddis, Robert Coover, John Barth, and Kurt Vonnegut. That the 'postmodern' status of these authors should be italicised in such a fashion, placed in question from the very outset, is a consequence of the inherent slipperiness of the term. Whilst there are a variety of predominantly aesthetic and stylistic qualities that have been seen as uniting a variety of literatures under the 'postmodern' banner (self-reflexivity, use of pastiche, the prominence of a certain brand of irony, and so on), if postmodern literature as a category were extended to cover all works which display such tendencies, then a host of unambiguously un-postmodern writers from Shakespeare to Cervantes would henceforth have to be reclassified as postmodern.

Postmodernism is not a purely aesthetic or stylistic denominator but a term directed toward an understanding of the social, cultural, and economic structures of a particular point in history. It is in this sense that Fredric Jameson states that it is "not possible intellectually or

politically simply to celebrate postmodernism or to 'disavow' it" (Jameson 1998, p33). Postmodernism "is not an exclusively aesthetic or stylistic term" (Jameson 1998, p34); rather, it refers to a point in time, a period of history. Whilst Jameson is correct in pointing out the absurdity of either celebrating or disavowing postmodernity (which, to his understanding at least, would be an absurdity akin to the possibility of literally accepting or denying the very time that one lives in), an understanding of the way in which persons *have* expressed a veneration or rejection of 'postmodernism' can be enlightening. A case in point is provided by the statement, commonly heard in certain academic circles, concerning postmodernism's rejection of 'the Enlightenment'. As Jameson points out, to reject a period of history is an absurdity. Yet a recognition of the intent and meaning of this statement would certainly constitute no problem for Jameson himself. Whilst he is correct in a certain sense, no-one *literally* rejects the time that they live in (although this ^{might} ~~may~~ be eminently possible in a metaphorical or spiritual sense: one may choose to reject one's society or even 'the world of appearances' entirely), people can and do reject the particular modes of thought that dominate certain eras. What is involved in the statement 'Postmodernism rejects the Enlightenment' is not one period of time rejecting another, but one historically dominant mode of thought (and all that this entails: methodologies, world-views, ethical systems, etc.) rejecting another. Postmodern refers not just to a period of time but also to a particular way of thinking in and about that time. Postmodern literature is, in one sense, discernibly postmodern by virtue of the fact that it arises out of postmodern society and directs its energies toward an interrogation of this world. (Given that postmodern writers are almost unanimously critical of certain facets of postmodern society, they might be called 'postmodernists against postmodernity'). However, postmodern literature is also postmodern by virtue of the fact that it looks at this world with a postmodern eye, interrogates it with a postmodern brain, and moralises about it with a postmodern heart. (It is in this sense that postmodern writing might be called 'postmodernism against postmodernism via postmodernism'). As much as postmodern literature may be said to be involved in a particularly 'postmodern' way of looking at the world, operating via procedures that could be confidently categorised as 'postmodern', an exhaustive explication of the particular understanding of 'postmodernity' that is invoked here is far beyond the scope of this thesis. Indeed, the task may be completely impossible, for the inherent slipperiness and multiple significances of the term 'postmodern' often threaten to indefinitely deny conclusive definition (a particularly postmodern trait, one might say). However, it has been my aim to attempt to demonstrate how the specificities of postmodern literature are deployed in its engagement with the subject of paranoia, and what significances follow as a result of this form of engagement.

To my mind, what defines the best of American postmodern literature is a critical engagement with the contemporary social world. Whether this procedure be labelled deconstruction, denaturalisation, defamiliarisation, or whatever other term one may choose

to use, it is always concerned with critical engagement. It is in this sense that paranoia and postmodernism may be considered connected on yet another level. Far from being a form of retreat from the world, a particular form of paranoia demonstrated by the postmodern American novel is a critically 'suspicious' mode of engagement with the world, a dialogue between the individual and society that takes nothing for granted except the capacity of its own interrogatory impulses to yield a fuller vision of the postmodern world.

Such preliminary remarks being tabled, it yet remains to undertake the task as such, and whilst some pre-emptive remarks regarding the conceptual and methodological underpinnings of this thesis have been outlined above, a more intensive and directed exposition is still necessary. The first section of this thesis thus provides a survey of the conceptual terrain that is necessary for an understanding of postmodern American novels' presentations of paranoia, an essential elucidation of the roles of such phenomena as postmodernism, schizophrenic chaos, and linguistic relations, as well as an exploration of the relevant aspects of issues of representation, epistemology and the construction of consensual realities. Don DeLillo's 1985 novel *White Noise* is here used as the primary text for analytic elucidation, not only because of my own personal belief in its status as the unacknowledged textbook for postmodern living, but also due to the fact that its critical reception was marked by an attention to the novel's particularly close relation to Jean Baudrillard's and Fredric Jameson's seminal works on the subject of postmodernity. These are works that are also particularly relevant here in that they have been the prime expositors of the concept of 'postmodern schizophrenia'. The early sections of the thesis are fundamentally concerned with postmodern American literature's representations of the ex-centring, schizophrenic chaos of the postmodern world. For this is seen as being the conceptual ground that impels the paranoid project and forms the territory upon which different forms of paranoia are played out.

A common theme that runs through this thesis is the idea that, for much postmodern American literature, a variety of forms of paranoia perform the task of the linguistic imposition of fictive boundaries upon what is an unbounded, chaotically schizophrenic world. Briefly put, the argument runs thus: For the postmodern American novel, the postmodern world is simply too complex to adequately explain with traditional meta-narratives, stubbornly showing an almost malicious resistance to all attempts to impose delimited meaning upon it. However, both social groups and the individual still display a need to orient themselves in the world, to interpret some sort of order from its chaos. The chaotic, schizophrenic nature of this world is seen as threatening the self with the complete loss of boundaries, impelling the paranoid task of the construction of a bounded paranoid world-view in order to defend the integrity of the self. Paranoia is thus portrayed by the

postmodern American novel as a particular project of imposing fictive linguistic boundaries upon the inherently unbounded world.

The second section of this thesis focuses on mass paranoia, the phenomenon of the paranoid group-mind and its various incarnations in such forms as hysterical contagion, moral panic and the practice of scapegoating. Mass paranoia is a phenomenon that has been almost unanimously criticised as oppressively anti-individualistic by a wide range of literary works. I have utilised a variety of texts (including works by Norman Mailer, Robert Coover, William S. Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, and Kurt Vonnegut) in order to present an overview of the range of similarly critical responses to the phenomenon of group paranoia. Given the critical nature of these literary presentations of mass paranoia, one of the more important issues arising from any analysis of the subject is the necessity of carefully interrogating the (sometimes hazy) distinction between unconscious complicity and conscious critique. Whilst popular texts such as William L. Pierce's *The Turner Diaries* and Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun* often exhibit to varying degrees the features of full-blown paranoia, other works (such as the many novels of Richard Condon, most well known as the author of *The Manchurian Candidate*) articulate an ambivalent position. Most postmodern American fiction, on the other hand, consciously takes an overtly critical stance toward the phenomenon of mass paranoia. For the postmodern novel, the dangers of paranoid world-creations arise from their lack of self-reflexivity, their failure to recognise the fictional, contingent nature of their particular views of the world. Whilst earlier analyses demonstrate that, for the postmodern novel, all world-creations are, in a sense, fictional, and that some sense of structured order must be imposed on the chaotic postmodern world in order for the individual to be able to meaningfully respond to his or her surroundings, there is still the implication that one must be able to view reality in an ordered fashion and yet be aware of the uncertain value of that structure as an interpretative system.

Given the repetition of criticisms lodged against the mass paranoia that has been prominent throughout much of the history of American literature, the influence of certain trends and tendencies in American history upon the representation of mass paranoia cannot be overstated. A brief elucidation of the relevance of particular historical details to manifestations of mass paranoia in American social life is hence undertaken in an appendix to the thesis.

The third section examines the works of Thomas Pynchon, focusing on how the idea of the substitution of paranoid order for the unordered and alienating chaos of the postmodern world operates in his work. The particular issues invoked by Pynchon's representations of the paranoia of the individual are explicated and analysed here. The relative ambivalence that Pynchon's works show is explained as being a consequence of the view that paranoid

cognitive processes are utilised by all persons, and that they constitute a necessary part of any individual's world-view. In Pynchon's works, 'relative paranoia' is shown to be necessary for characters to negotiate a territory between the extremes of totally solipsistic paranoid narcissism on the one hand and the dangers of a totally anti-paranoid stance on the other. The criticism lodged against paranoia in this case lies in Pynchon's condemnation of the paranoid's lack of consciousness of the fictive nature of the paranoid world-view. For Pynchon, whilst all world-creations are 'paranoid' in certain ways, some sense of structured order must be imposed on the chaotic postmodern world in order for the individual to be able ~~to~~ meaningfully ^{to} respond to his or her surroundings. However, there is also the implication that one must be able to view reality in an ordered fashion, and still be aware of the uncertain value of that structure as an interpretative system. For Pynchon, the potential dangers of all world-creations arise from their lack of self-reflexivity, their failure to recognise the 'paranoid' nature of any view of the world.

Whilst the second and third sections of this thesis are dominated by the idea, proposed by postmodern American literature, that paranoia performs the function of imposing fictive linguistic boundaries upon the inherently unbounded world, the fourth section completes the thesis, bringing it full circle by focusing upon the particular form of 'paranoia' utilised by the postmodern American novel in interrogating the details of both individual and group paranoia. Though earlier analyses of the postmodern novel's presentation of paranoia demonstrate it to be involved in the process of projectively tracing power to a distinct origin and an evil presence—personalising and allegorising conflict, and thereby structuring, familiarising, and naturalising paranoid world-views—the form of 'paranoia' deployed by postmodern American novels does not aim to perform such a project of reinstating a lost sense of order. Rather, it deconstructs the means used to accomplish this goal and interrogates the motivations that lie behind such attempts. What is here presented as the 'paranoid critical stance' is particularly evident in the works of Burroughs, DeLillo and Pynchon as a form of 'defamiliarisation': the process of problematising normative assumptions (familiarily known and unquestioned due to their 'natural' status) and thereby revealing their 'conspiratorial' sociopolitical functions. These acts of defamiliarisation aim not only to expose the relativity and arbitrariness of hegemonic power relations, but also to point out the numerous faults and inherent systemic inequalities hidden by their 'natural', normative status. The 'paranoid' quality of American postmodern fiction is thus motivated by a refusal to allow the critical gaze to stultify into any form of uncritical, socially orthodox response to sociopolitical power relations. Whilst the postmodern novel's presentation of paranoia will, in earlier sections, be shown to articulate the necessity for some sort of shaping of the chaotic matter of reality, some imposition of form upon chaos, this is consistently presented by the postmodern novel as being under the danger that any one shape will be reified, made static with attendant horrendous results. The answer proposed by Burroughs and Pynchon would seem to lie in a view of the world that

recognises its own fictive elements. For to recognise the ambivalent status of world-creations is to deny the most dangerous possibilities of paranoia by utilising its positive potential to discriminate between varying world-creations. Whilst Jodi Dean states that paranoia "responds to anxieties surrounding what can be assumed to be real or certain in today's high-tech televisual culture by reassuring us that out there somewhere, however hard to find, there is a stable, identifiable truth" (Dean 1998, p17-18), the 'paranoid critical stance' of the postmodern novel offers no such force of reassurance. Instead it insists on the necessity of the constant creation and critical reworking of a plurality of 'truths'.

Section 1

Conceptual Territory

In plain words, Chaos was the law of nature; Order was the dream of man.

Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*

The utilisation of the concept of schizophrenia as a literary device, whether this be as symbolic trope or structurally informing metaphor, whilst prominent with regard to postmodern literature, is certainly not a new thing. It is interesting to note that both Kafka and Beckett, two writers cited as major influences upon the literary development of postmodernity, are precisely those writers ^{for} to whom the metaphor of schizophrenia may be said to be of considerable critical importance. In such a brief discussion of these two writers, of whose large body of texts numerous (and sometimes contradictory) interpretations have proliferated from all sides, it is inevitable that certain readings will be favoured over others. Although credence is not given to the attribution of schizophrenia itself to either Kafka or Beckett as individuals, the importance to their writings of a certain understanding of schizophrenia is notable. Jameson's statement that "the fragmentary, schizophrenic aesthetic" of postmodernism "in reality begins with existentialism" (Jameson 1992b, p41) is a useful starting point. For not only are Kafka and Beckett writers who have been (often stigmatically) marked as 'existentialist', but existentialism itself is a movement that links literature, philosophy, and psychoanalysis in a forum for analysing the relation of the subject to his/her world.⁹ The writings of R.D. Laing (an identifiable exponent of the existentialist tradition) on clinical schizophrenia are by no means limited by the boundaries that distinguish 'real' schizophrenia from its 'metaphorical' literary counterpart. The fluidity that exists between Laing's analysis of clinically diagnosed schizophrenics and philosophical/literary expressions of the existential 'schizoid self', although still far from any postmodern 'implosion' of the two realms, does lend itself to a recognition that one may often illuminate understanding of the other. Laing sees what he calls 'ontological insecurity', denoting a schizophrenic perspective, in Kafka's short story 'Conversation with a Suppliant'. In particular, he notes the suppliant's statement "'There has

⁹ Existentialism is also a philosophical mode that has been shown to be particularly pertinent to American literature. Jameson has written remarkably cynically of the peculiar character of American literary existentialism, "the existential paradigm, in the non-technical sense of the term, using it in that middle-brow acception in which in current American culture it has come to designate *Catch-22* or Mailer's novels. Existentialism here means neither Heidegger nor Sartre, but rather the anti-hero of the sad-sack, Saul Bellow type, and a kind of self pitying vision of alienation (also meant in its media rather than its technical sense), frustration, and above all—yesterday's all-American concept—the 'inability to communicate'" (Jameson 1992b, p41-42). Ihab Hassan has commented more sympathetically upon the existential tradition within American literature in *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel*, although he similarly distinguishes this from French and German existential philosophy (Hassan 1966 c1961).

never been a time in which I have been convinced from within myself that I am alive" (Kafka 1979 c1935, p80-81), indicating to him the particular feeling of praecox:¹⁰ the receding of reality from the self that marks the 'ontologically insecure' basis of the schizophrenic (Laing 1960, p116).¹¹ As Kafka's suppliant states: "I have only such a fugitive awareness of things around me that I always feel they were once real and are now fleeting away" (Kafka 1979 c1935, p81). This suggests that Kafka's work does point to an awareness of and preoccupation with a certain schizoid view of the world.

It is perhaps *The Trial*, with Josef K.'s failed search for a set of unknown (and possibly unknowable) arbitrary rules ('the law') of an unreachable entity ('the court') pointing to the play of language around an incomprehensibly ungoverned reality, that is most useful as an expository tool. For it is the distance from and uncertainty towards this implied 'incomprehensibility of reality' that marks Kafka as a 'schizophrenic' writer. In this regard, it would be correct to say with Anthony Thorlby that: "The sense of Kafka's stories does not ... depend primarily on any other reality than their own" (Thorlby 1976, p60). The content of Kafka's stories is indeed mysterious beyond any sort of mimetic comprehension. That they would aim to do representational justice to the 'real world' is unthinkable, no matter how obscene the machinations of ^{bureaucracy} ~~beauracracy~~ may seem to us. Anything that may seem even slightly representational has, in fact, been taken over completely by Kafka's literary world-creations, which are at a schismatically unbridgeable distance from 'the real'. To assert this distance is not to point to its inevitability, or to conclude that the text divorced from the real will lead towards a view of either texts or the world as being inherently meaningless. For Kafka's task is an examination of the character of literary meaning, rather than an illustration of the nature of the world. As J.P. Stern attests:

Kafka creates verbal contexts in which very ordinary words assume unusual meanings, or at least connotations. Yet it is equally important to remember that these new connotations are not free-floating and arbitrary, but derive from the contrast and tension he has built up between the old, accustomed meaning and the use of the word in its new, unexpected context.
(Stern 1976, p34)

Just as the human concept of 'justice' and the unknowably inhuman mechanisms of 'the law' are separated in *The Trial*, Kafka's fiction draws attention to its own "critical point of separation between story and meaning" (Thorlby 1976, p62). In such a manner, Kafka

¹⁰ Praecox might be described as the experience of being in the presence of another and yet feeling that there was no one 'really there'. The incomprehensibility of the 'madman', for example, may lead one to feel that there is no 'integral selfhood' expressed and that therefore, "[t]here is now only a vacuum where there was once a person" (Laing 1960, footnote p214).

¹¹ Laing describes three forms of anxiety encountered by the ontologically insecure (that will become relevant to this analysis as it develops), these being 'engulfment': the fear of loss of autonomy and identity in becoming engulfed by the relatedness of the world, 'implosion': the fear of the impingement of reality upon the individual, and 'petrification and depersonalisation': the fear of becoming/being an object-robot playing out a determined role (Laing 1960, p45-49).

foregrounds attention upon the processes of writing and language isolated from the domain of 'the real'. Without directly denying or effacing the concept of the real, in Kafka's works there is still "an image of the literary imagination itself, of language suspended in a void, the meaning of all other localised, particularised, connective meanings" (Thorlby 1976, p64). That the structure of language does not necessarily correspond to the structure of reality is alluded to by Kafka's works, but they do not yet assent to the idea that there is no conceivable structure of reality. It is this gap between language and 'the real', this receding of reality from the linguistically articulated self, that constitutes the 'schizophrenic' quality of Kafka's writing.

Thorlby remarks that 'nothingness' was a word that Kafka felt expressed his basic element: "This ultimate element of his literary aspiration he characterised repeatedly as negative, as nothingness" (Thorlby 1976, p79). Kafka's aspiration to knowledge as representational correspondence with the realms of 'truth' or 'the real' thus led him to an ultimately negative achievement: "a negative elimination of all significant difference between consciousness and existence" (Thorlby 1976, p80). As I will demonstrate presently, the idea of a negative achievement in attempting to eliminate the distinction between the forms of language and the content of reality is also strongly related to the writings of Samuel Beckett. But, though the writings of Kafka and Beckett may be related, it is obvious that major differences between the two do mark a significant break. For a description of the essence of this distinction we may turn to Beckett himself:

You notice how Kafka's form is classic, it goes on like a steamroller—almost serene. It seems to be threatened the whole time—but the consternation is in the form. In my work, there is consternation behind the form, not in the form.
(Cited in (McMillan 1988, p13-14))

Beckett's telling insistence upon the distinction between form and that which is 'behind the form' is well expressed in another of his remarks upon his own art:

There will be new form, and this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now.
(Cited in (McMillan 1988, p14))

Beckett's distinction between form and chaos ultimately relates to the schizophrenic disjunction between the structured stations of language and the unstructured content of reality, the fictions of form and the ineffaceable chaos of the world. This disjunction is particularly evident in Beckett's last English novel, *Watt*. *Watt* is narrated by the asylum inmate Sam, who in turn is repeating the narrative of Watt concerning Mr. Knott. The novel (which is the discourse of 'Sam'-uel Beckett) answers Watt's questioning of the nature of the world (Watt asks 'What?') with denial (Mr. Knott, the tangled Knot of nothingness, answers negatively: 'Not!'). During Watt's attempts to empirically order the chaotic mess of

reality, he continually finds himself in situations wherein matching words with objects becomes an absurd and meaningless task. Of particular pertinence is an episode wherein Watt encounters a pot that refuses to coincide with its linguistic referent:

Looking at a pot, for example, or thinking of a pot, at one of Mr. Knott's pots, or of Mr. Knott's pots, it was in vain that Watt said, Pot, pot.... For it was not a pot, the more he looked, the more he reflected, the more he felt sure of that, that it was not a pot at all. It resembled a pot, it was almost a pot, but it was not a pot of which one could say, Pot, pot, and be comforted. It was in vain that it answered, with unexceptionable adequacy, all the purposes, and performed all the offices, of a pot, it was not a pot
(Beckett 1976 c1953, p78)

"Watt's need of semantic succour" (Beckett 1976 c1953, p79) is presented as being incompatible with the existence of Watt's grail: the elusive Mr. Knott, who is the novel's representative of the supreme 'Nothingness' that, for Beckett, constitutes the nature of the world, is only to be encountered beyond the rational forms of language.

As Raymond Federman points out in his tellingly entitled book, *Journey to Chaos: Samuel Beckett's Early Fiction*, Watt's failure to impose order upon the chaotic world of Mr. Knott eventually leads him to an insane asylum (Federman 1965, p97). In this asylum, Watt experiences a schizophrenic undifferentiation of consciousness, expressing the aforementioned 'negative elimination of all significant difference between consciousness and existence'. The failure of Watt's task thus expresses the schismatic division between language and the real, pointing to the inability of the structured forms of logic and language to contain the chaotic mess of the real. As the novel follows Watt's quest, the question is asked: "WHAT is this KNOT which in the process of being disentangled leads to NOTHING?" (Federman 1965, p119). In posing this question, Watt's attempts to understand Mr. Knott lead him into a scene of meaninglessness, where logic destroys itself in contradiction and absurdity. Watt eventually falls prey to the schizophrenic flux of Nothingness that, according to Beckett, is the underlying nature of all existence, irrational, arbitrary and beyond all control.¹² The quest for knowledge as correspondence to the truth of the world-in-itself is a failure.

Related to Watt's inability to immerse himself completely in either the realms of logic and language or the chaotic flux of Nothingness is J.J. White's statement that, because of Kafka's heroes' similarly "stubborn empirical method" in the face of largely metaphysical challenges "the novels could not effect a successful transition to an ending" (White 1976, p148). According to White, this lack of closure is connected to the "inability to complete structural patterns" that marks Kafka's many unfinished works (White 1976, p148). Kafka's inability to complete structural patterns, I will suggest, is further related to Beckett's own wilful lack of closure. As J.P. Stern notices, the end of the exchange of ambiguities

¹² On this topic see particularly (O'Hara 1970a, p2).

between Josef K. and the prison chaplain in *The Trial* (the meaning of which is dangerously clear to the reader as referring to the last rites of the condemned man) ends with a situation of bondage to the law (the incomprehensible 'real') that is similar to certain situations presented within Beckett's texts (Stern 1976, p36-37). Compare Kafka's scene with the identical endings of each half of Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*:

'Do you want to go now?' [the clergyman asks] 'Yes, Of course I must go. I have a responsible position in the bank ...'
 'Very well ... then go ...' The priest had taken a few steps away when K. called in a loud voice: 'Please wait.'
 'I'm waiting', said the priest.
 'Is there nothing more you want from me?' K. asked.
 'No', said the priest ... 'But you do have to go' ...
 'But yes', K. said. 'You must understand why' ... his immediate return to the bank was not as necessary as he had claimed, he could easily stay here longer.
 (Kafka 1994 c1925, p172-173)

Vladimir/Estragon: 'Well, shall we go?'
 Estragon/Vladimir: 'Yes, let's go.'
They do not move.
 (Beckett 1977 c1955, pp54, 94)

To this we might also add the famous first and last lines of *The Unnamable*:

Where now? Who now? When now? ... Keep going, going on, call that going, call that on.
 (Beckett 1979 c1959, p267)

... you must go on, I can't go on, you must go on, I'll go on ... you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on.
 (Beckett 1979 c1959, p381-382)

Despite Beckett's characters' reliance upon the structures of language to impose comprehensible narrative order upon their lives, there can be no escape from the realm of the real that denies the forms, structures and boundaries of beginning and end that mark the forms of language and literature. The chaotic nature of the real enforces the characters' inability to escape to the realms of free-floating language unanchored in reality. Malone, for example, writes in order to be heard, in an attempt to place structure and order upon his life, yet consistently falls into confusion and frustrating contradiction due to the hopelessness of this task. Such attempts to construct meaning and order are revealed by Beckett's characters to be fictive, arbitrary and ultimately futile. As Molloy remarks:

All I know is what the words know, and the dead things, and that makes a handsome little sum, with a beginning, a middle and an end as in the well-built phrase and the long sonata of the dead. And truly it matters little what I say, this or that or any other thing. Saying is inventing. Wrong, very rightly wrong. You invent nothing, you think you are inventing, you think you are escaping, and all you do is stammer out your lesson, the remnants of a pensum one day got by heart and long forgotten, life without tears, all it is wept.
 (Beckett 1979 c1959, p31)

Beckett's desire to find a "form that accommodates the chaos" may be seen as an attempt to allow the chaotic mess of reality to shine through the cracked forms of his writing. As Ruby Cohn remarks on this aspect of Beckett's writings: "composition takes place during decomposition" (Cohn 1962, p285). Rather than asserting the proposition that Beckett's works proceed toward chaos and apparent meaninglessness as *opposed* to the goal of knowledge of other texts, we may state that the goal of knowledge as correspondence to reality is present in Beckett precisely *as* correspondence to the meaningless chaos of reality. This seems implicit in seeking a "form to accommodate the chaos", a procedure by which the precedence of chaotic reality over the defined forms and structured boundaries of language, the precedence of chaotic content over ordered form, is made manifest.

Just as Beckett implies that the unstructured world may be revealed more fruitfully by the fractured text, that chaotic forms of writing may more fully accommodate the chaotic content of the real, at times Laing asserts the idea that the formless mode of vision of the schizophrenic may allow access to a realm of being that expresses the truth of the world: "The cracked mind of the schizophrenic may *let in* light which does not enter the intact minds of many sane people whose minds are closed. Ezekial, in Jaspers' opinion, was a schizophrenic" (Laing 1960, p28). The religious overtones present in Laing's description of the schizophrenic as one who may gain direct access to the divine light of truth are also present in Frank Kermode's discussion of Beckett's works:

[Beckett] is the perverse theologian of a world which has suffered a fall, experienced an Incarnation which changes all relations of past, present, and future, but which will not be redeemed ... It is a world crying out for forms and stations, and for apocalypse; all it gets is vain temporality, mad, multiform antithetical influx.
(Kermode 1967, p115)

At times the fluid chaos of Beckett's world is defined in terms such as 'nothingness' and 'void',¹³ expressions similar to those that have been applied to the works of Kafka. However, in Beckett's texts we begin to see a tension between chaos figured as an absence, as nothingness, and a conception of chaos as a positive presence, such as is present in Kermode's notion of the "multiform antithetical influx". Though Beckett's texts do often lapse into silence,¹⁴ they are also characterised by positive chaotic textual eruptions, what can only be described as formless 'noise'. Take, for example, such repetitive unhinging of speech from sense as is provided by Lucky's speech in *Waiting for Godot*:

Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattman of a personal God quaquaquaqu with white beard quaquaquaqu outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell

¹³ See particularly (Butler 1984), (Dearlove 1982), (Federman 1965).

¹⁴ As the valet Arsene says in *Watt*, "you will hear my voice no more, only the silence of which the universe is made" (Beckett 1976 c1953, p54).

and suffers like the divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell ... [etc. ad nauseam]
(Beckett 1977 c1955, p42-45)

At such points in Beckett's work, determinate meaning may be lacking, but textual information is certainly not. In seeking to find a "form to accommodate the chaos", Beckett's fictions thus approach a form of positive textual chaos themselves. However, they achieve this while insisting upon the unbridgeable schism between the representational realms of language and the unrepresentability of the real: the order of the word and the chaos of the world.¹⁵ The idea of a schism between word and world will be a continuing concern throughout this section, but of immediate importance is the conceptualisation of chaos as a positive rather than negative force, as an inescapable 'schizophrenic' omnipresence rather than the absence of nothingness.

The word 'chaos' derives from the Greek 'kha', meaning 'to yawn, to gape'. Thus the Oxford English Dictionary defines chaos in negative terms, as an absence: "A gaping void, yawning gulf, chasm, or abyss". Similarly, the binary tradition of the West initially defined chaos in negative terms as disorder ('not-order'). On this topic, a passage from Diderot's *Oeuvres Esthétiques* is worth noting, not only for the fact that it summarises a common formulation of the positive quality of order opposed to the negative quality of chaos, but also because it refers to the artificiality of human order (a concept familiar from the work of Beckett):

Here then ... are ideas of order, arrangement, symmetry, mechanism, proportion, unity; all these ideas came from the senses and are artificial; and we have passed from the notion of a multitude of artificial and natural beings—arranged, proportioned, combined, and made symmetrical—to the positive and abstract notion of order, arrangement, proportion, comparison, relations, symmetry, and to the negative notion of disproportion, disorder and chaos.
(Diderot 1968, p415-416)

In contrast to mechanistic ideas of order, chaos is usually defined as disparate, dissociated, and fragmented: as fluid and lacking in boundaries. Thus Ralph Ellison writes of the chaos of the world in *Invisible Man*: "The world in which we lived was without boundaries. A vast, seething, hot world of fluidity" (Ellison 1952 c1947, p487). The 'fluidity' of chaos is also addressed by N. Katherine Hayles in her opposition of the mechanist models of Newtonian science to the newer scientific models of chaos theory:¹⁶

¹⁵ These two factors are, in fact, related, for the schism that divides the word and the world exists precisely because the chaotic real is properly unrepresentable.

¹⁶ A brief mention of a few of the particularities of chaos theory seems necessary here. Chaos theory was initially popularised by James Gleick's aptly titled 1987 book *Chaos: Making a New Science*. Gleick repetitively describes the chaos of the chaos theorists as being a somewhat 'orderly disorder' (Gleick 1994 c1987). The complex systems of the chaologist are seen as being disordered in that they are unpredictable and fluid, but they also replicate almost (but not quite) common patterns over time.

Whereas the Newtonians focused on the clock as an appropriate image for the world, chaos theorists are apt to choose the waterfall. The clock is ordered, predictable, regular, and mechanically precise; the waterfall is turbulent, unpredictable, irregular, and infinitely varying in form.
(Hayles 1991b, p8)

This sort of metaphorical association of chaos with water is common. According to one of the many Ancient Egyptian accounts of creation, only the ocean existed at first, then Ra (the sun) came out of an egg (or flower in some versions) that appeared on the surface of the water. Undoubtedly the most influential association of chaos with water occurs in the very first few sentences of the Bible:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
Genesis 1: 1-2

Although the pre-existent primordial state of chaos is here described negatively as 'darkness', 'without form', and 'void', this is in tension with a positive conception of chaos as being 'the deep' and 'the waters'. John Milton's *Paradise Lost* maintains a similar tension in describing chaos as both a "wild Abyss" and "The womb of nature" (Milton 1989 c1968—book 2, lines 910-911). This tension between positive and negative chaos is extended throughout the passage in book two, in which Satan and his son, Death, look out upon Chaos. This passage emphasises such negative qualities as darkness and lack of boundaries, as well as containing a positive association of chaos with water:

Before their eyes in sudden view appear
The secrets of the hoary deep, a dark
Illimitable Ocean without bound,
Without dimension, where length, breadth, and heighth,
And time and place are lost; where eldest Night
And Chaos, Ancestors of Nature, hold
Eternal Anarchy, amidst the noise,
Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.
(Milton 1989 c1968—book 2, lines 891-897)

As is shown by the above examples, chaos is also seen as that which precedes the act of creation. Hesiod's *Theogony*, for example, designates chaos as being the undifferentiated state which existed before anything else. Mary M. Innes's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* similarly describes chaos as that which existed prior to the creation of the world: "a shapeless uncoordinated mass, nothing but a weight of lifeless matter, whose ill-assorted elements were indiscriminately heaped together in one place" (Ovid 1955, p29). A related idea is elaborated by Wallace Stevens' poem *The Idea of Order at Key West*,

These patterns themselves contain no implicit or inherent meaning. This is further complicated by the fact that these repetitive structures not only imply endless fields and a sense of open-ended teeming chaos, but are also involved in feedback loops: the output of a system fed back into the system as input, the system continually recreating itself from the specific point of its current state. Perhaps the most

which mentions: "The water never formed to mind or voice", and: "Blessed rage for order, ... /The maker's rage to order words of the sea", alluding to an understanding of chaos as the unformed and unthought antithesis of mentally constructed order. In this context, the emphasis upon creative acts of division given in both the Bible ("and God divided the light from the darkness. ... And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters" *Genesis*, 1: 4-6), and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* ("This strife was finally resolved by a god ... who separated the earth from the heaven, and the waters from the earth ... forming a harmonious union" (Ovid 1955, p29)) refers to the linguistic institution of mentally ordered structures and boundaries over the primordial chaotic mess. This conjecture is further supported by the opposition of mental 'light' to the 'darkness' of chaos in both instances. In the Bible in particular, this light is associated with The Word of God. Thus it is language that is seen as bestowing form upon the formless, order upon chaos.

Postmodern literature may be said to articulate a particular understanding of the characteristics of chaos similar to those outlined above, the chaotic form of the postmodern novel alluding to the chaotic nature of the world that precedes and supersedes the linguistic institution of mental boundaries that construct the artificially ordered domain in which individuals live. One of the most important elements of the chaotic form of postmodern literature is its active resistance to closed definition, structure and form. In this regard, perhaps the most useful definition of postmodern literature is provided by Stanley Trachtenberg's insistence upon its resistance to determinate definition: "Postmodernism continues to resist definition, and in particular a definition based on an oppositional relation to modernism ... it has evolved as a critical term that finds a unifying point of reference only in its fluidity" (Trachtenberg 1995b, p21). The particular 'fluidity' of postmodern literature is most strikingly witnessed in its presentation of texts that are overflowing with information, but chaotically unstructured and schizophrenically unsynthesised information that resists determinate definition.¹⁷ The positive chaos of the postmodern text takes the form of an excess of raw information that supersedes any perception of implicit meaning, a form of what is popularly known as 'information overload'.¹⁸ Defining postmodernism in opposition to modernism, Ihab Hassan sees this chaotic 'dispersal' and 'indeterminacy' of the open-ended 'disjunctive' 'antiform' of

recognisable example of this is provided by fractal geometry, in particular the repetitiously swirling, psychedelically multicoloured Mandelbrot sets now popular in much contemporary graphic art.

¹⁷ It is for this reason that the postmodern novel has been described by Tom LeClair as 'the novel of excess' (LeClair 1989) and by others as 'encyclopaedic fiction' (Mendelson 1976) and 'the literature of information' (Stark 1980).

¹⁸ As Jean Baudrillard writes, "Information now expands to such an extent that it no longer has anything to do with gaining knowledge" (Baudrillard 1991, p2). This distinction between information and knowledge has a cousin in the distinction between sign and referent. Just as Shannon Weaver's mathematical theories of communication separated the raw data of information from actual

postmodernism as a reaction against the 'centring' and 'determinacy' of the closed form of the modernist text (Hassan 1995, p87). Hassan's expression of the postmodern text's opposition to the tendencies of modernist literature may be considered to be somewhat suspect (perhaps the most intuitive comment on this issue has been John Barth's statement that, if postmodernism rejects modernism, "it does so in the same way that some children reject their parents, while still retaining their genes" (Barth 1995 c1991, p292), but the emphasis Hassan places upon the fractured forms of the postmodern text is valid. As Tom LeClair writes in *The Art of Excess*:

Postmodernism tends to fragment structures and create collages in the text. Character, plot, and setting are the essential elements given order and proportion in realism. Postmodernism diminishes and deforms the significance of these elements and emphasises patterns of language... showing how order and forms in the world (and not just in the artistic sense) can arise out of seeming chaos. (LeClair 1989, p21)

In such a way, postmodern literature is less the "literature of silence" that Hassan describes¹⁹ than it is a distinctively noisy literature of positive chaos and of infinite clashing voices, such as is described by Brock Vond's vision of hell in Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* (which, incidentally, associates this positive chaos with water):

... the sound of the river, echoing, harsh, ceaseless, and beyond it the drumming, voices, not chanting together but remembering, speculating, arguing, telling tales, uttering curses, singing songs, all the things voices do, but without ever allowing the briefest breath of silence. All these voices, forever. (Pynchon 1991 c1990, p379—my emphasis)

The positive chaotic form of postmodern literature represents the chaos of the postmodern world in a manner similar in intent to Beckett's attempt to find "a form to accommodate the chaos". It is the postmodern convergence of content and form that produces chaotic texts such as the fractured and disordered 'cut-ups' of William S. Burroughs, the polyglot texts of Thomas Pynchon, and the collage-effect pastiches of Don DeLillo (all to be examined at length in due course). In such works both the text and the world are presented as chaotic (as 'chaosmos', to use Joyce's term), establishing an analogous relation between the chaotic text and the chaotic world. However, the division between language and the world is still recognised within the texts themselves. There is thus a tension between this analogous relation of world and text, and the realisation that the word does not (and indeed cannot) entirely correspond to objects in the external world. As William S. Burroughs writes in *The Job*: "The idea that the label is the thing leads to all sorts of verbal arguments, when you're dealing with words, and think you're dealing with objects" (Odier 1970, p23). However, for postmodern writers, the fictional creations of art and the individual's experience of the world are not necessarily in conflict. For Burroughs, for example, art is not in direct conflict with the individual's experience of 'reality', for both are seen to be

communicated meaning, the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure separated the textual sign from its implied referent, the word from the world. See (Saussure 1993 c1915) and (Weaver 1962 c1949a).

constructed. As Burroughs writes in *The Exterminator*: "They are rebuilding the City Lee Knows in Four Letter Words. Vibrating Air Hammers The Code Write" (Burroughs 1968 c1960, p68). The city is a city of language. Similarly, a character in Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon* remarks: "'Forms of the Land, the flow of water, the occurrence of what us'd to be call'd Miracles, all are Text,—to be attended to, manipulated, read, remember'd'" (Pynchon 1997, p487). The effective world (the world of lived experience, as distinct from the world of things)²⁰ is linguistically constructed, formed by linguistically constructed subjects. As Lacan writes in *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*: "it is the world of words which creates the world of things" (Lacan 1981 c1968, p39). For postmodern literature, then, the fact that novels in particular are fictional constructions that do not correspond to the brute chaos of the world is related to the fact that individuals' visions of the world are themselves fictional constructions of narrative form. As Stanley Trachtenberg points out, it is because of this fact that postmodernity produces fiction that "is not merely about the writing of fiction ... but about the way language both creates meaning and shapes the world—itsself a fiction" (Trachtenberg 1995b, p6).²¹ As Norman Mailer writes in *A Fire on the Moon*: "It seemed to [me] that everybody, literate and illiterate alike, had in the privacy of their unconsciousness worked out a vast social novel by which they could make sense of society.... as life presented new evidence, the book was altered in its details" (Mailer 1970, p146). A similar conjunction between the effective world and the textual world is presented by the writings of Argentinean fabulist Jorge Luis Borges. In *The Library of Babel*, Borges articulates a vision of the universe as a gigantic (perhaps infinite) library filled with books constituted by all possible random combinations of letters, presenting the universe of man as a world of words that both compels and defies any search for the 'true' or the 'real'. The protagonist of *The Garden of Forking Paths* discovers a garden and a book that are one and the same thing, similarly conflating concepts of world and text. Perhaps the overriding factor that orders Borges's

¹⁹ See particularly (Hassan 1971).

²⁰ The distinction between the 'effective world' and 'the world of things' is explained by George W. Grace as relating to the distinction between sensible reality (the world of things as distinct from human understandings of it) and particular conceptual understandings of this reality: "our environment as we perceive it and respond to it (as contrasted with the part played by the actual characteristics of the external environment itself)" (Grace 1987, p3). The importance of language in constructing the effective world is emphasised by Grace, who argues that the realities in which human beings live their lives are linguistically constructed: "Not only is language the means by which this kind of reality construction is accomplished, it is also the means by which the realities, once constructed, are preserved and transmitted from person to person and from generation to generation. Hence, it is entirely appropriate to refer ... to the linguistic construction of reality" (Grace 1987, p3).

²¹ That the effective world is constructed does not necessarily bestow the denigrating status of falsehood upon it. As Nelson Goodman argues, "'Fabrication' has become a synonym for 'falsehood' or 'fiction' as contrasted with 'truth' and 'fact'. Of course, we must distinguish falsehood and fiction from truth and fact; but we cannot, I am sure, do it on the ground that fiction is fabricated and fact found" (Goodman 1978, p91). According to Goodman, "truth cannot be defined or tested by agreement with 'the world'; for not only do truths differ for different worlds but the nature of agreement between a version and a world apart from it is notoriously nebulous.... Truth, far from being a solemn and severe master, is a docile and obedient servant" (Goodman 1978, p17-18).

fictions is the idea that 'men live in labyrinths of their own construction'. This loss of distinction between fiction and lived reality occurs through the recognition of the fact that the effective reality of the individual is narratively constructed in a fashion similar to that of fiction. In *Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*, Borges relates the story of an invented world that gains a form of existence in the real world. The narrator's statement, "I owe the discovery of Uqbar to the conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopaedia" (Borges 1970 c1962, p27) alludes to the idea that these labyrinths are linguistically based constructs of the mind's eye reflected against the outer world.

Discussing the subject of the interrelation of the postmodern world and the postmodern text, N. Katherine Hayles argues that what makes a text 'postmodern' is not particular literary and aesthetic strategies in isolation, (so-called 'postmodern' devices are to be found in abundance throughout almost the entire history of literature²²), but rather "their connection through complex feedback loops with postmodernism as a cultural dominant": "Other times have had glimpses of what it would mean to live in a denatured world. But never before have such strong feedback loops among culture, theory, and technology brought it so close to being a reality" (Hayles 1990, p295). The postmodern utilisation of popular and mass culture, for example, functions to a large extent by integrating commonly lived cultural life within novelistic discourses, this occurring through both narrative presentation of such mediums and narrative incorporation of their modes (such as is evident in pastiche). As Paul Bové writes, due to the omnipresence of popular and mass culture in the postmodern world, "critics must be concerned with popular and mass culture, and they must bring to bear on this increasingly wide range of cultural production and consumption entirely new forms of critical power" (Bové 1983, p7). Postmodern literature often acts as a powerful critique of popular and mass culture. Bové's article is also illuminating in focusing on scientific modes of knowledge, particularly the work of postmodern theorists of science such as Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend. John Johnston further emphasises the importance of changing scientific world views in stating that postmodern novels "explore new ways of thinking in and about the postmodern world, especially as conceived and represented in the generally unfamiliar terms of physics, mathematics, technology and systems theory" (Johnston 1995, p180). The importance of scientific visions of the world, particularly the 'new sciences' such as cybernetics, systems theory and chaos theory (also known as chaotics, chaology, nonlinear dynamics, and complexity theory), should not be underestimated when dealing with postmodern fiction. For not only do science and technology have an undeniable impact upon the content of

²² Apart from previously mentioned examples (see p7-8), John Docker's recognition of the relevance of Menippean satire is notable here, particularly as his argument is foregrounded by Bakhtin's analysis of the polyphonic and dialogic characteristics of Menippean satire: "Philosophies featuring fragmentation, heterogeneity, randomness, have been quite common in intellectual and cultural history. We might also recall the Menippean satire of antiquity, conventionally dated to Menippus of Gadara in the third-century

the postmodern world, but their narrative visions of the form and nature of the universe are also shown to hold positions of intellectual authority. As David Porush writes in *The Soft Machine*: "Our century shows a remarkable intellectual unity, a vivacious dialogue between the arts and sciences that can easily be missed by a student working narrowly in a single discipline" (Porush 1985, p45). Though a full investigation of the rapidly expanding field of 'literature and science' is impossible here, a few main points of the development of this discourse do need to be explicated. The gap between the discourses of science and literature was most pressingly brought to attention by C.P. Snow's 1959 explication of 'the Two Cultures' and the ensuing (often unsavoury) public debate between Snow and F.R. Leavis. Snow contended that: "the intellectual life of the whole of western society is increasingly being split into two polar groups ... Literary intellectuals at one pole—at the other scientists, ... Between the two a gulf of mutual incomprehension" (Snow 1993 c1959, p3-4). Since that time, much work has been done both by scientists and by literary critics in order to bridge the gap between the two cultures. Perhaps one of the main reasons for the traditional hostility of the humanities toward science is the mistaken conflation of science with technology. The dystopian 'scientific' visions provided by such well known texts as George Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, to name just a few, are all predicated on a confusion and conflation of science with technology. Although science and technology do often interact in particularly close ways, they are by no means synonymous. This confusion is perhaps best explained by the increasingly common subsection of the processes of science to the dictates of technology.²³ Broadly speaking, technology is definable as the mechanistic manipulation and control of one's environment; science is primarily an activity of exploration and description. Karl Popper claims, "*what we attempt in science is to describe and (so far as possible) explain reality*" (Popper 1972, p81). According to Damien Broderick's *The Architecture of Babel: Discourses of Science and Literature*, science is thus "a species of story-telling, a kind of narrative", with obvious similarities to the processes of literature (Broderick 1994, p77). As George Levine puts it: "science and literature are two alternative but related expressions of a culture's values, assumptions and intellectual frameworks" (Levine 1987, pvii). The principal way in which the two cultures have, according to some, been united in contemporary theory is through such assertions of the narrative and textual bases of both as that provided by Anne K. Mellor:

The most significant dimension of the relationship between literature and science is the degree to which both enterprises are grounded in the use of metaphor and

BC. Unlike other satire which criticises people and activities from a fixed standpoint of morality, Menippean satire was always undermining any certainties of position and outlook" (Docker 1994, p124).

²³ This factor is mentioned by Lyotard in his analysis of the increasing domination of the profit-orientated concerns of technology over the scientific ideology of "progress in knowledge": "Capitalism solves the scientific problem of research funding in its own way: directly by financing research departments in private companies, in which demands for performativity and recommercialisation orient research first and foremost toward technological 'applications'" (Lyotard 1984 c1979, p45).

imagery. The explanatory models of science, like the plots of literary works, depend on linguistic structures which are shaped by metaphor and metonymy. (Cited in (Levine 1987, pviii))

Certain conjunctions of the discourses of science and literature have been so marked in postmodern literature that writers such as David Porush, N. Katherine Hayles, Susan Strehle and Tom LeClair have defined certain forms of fiction (including the novels of Don DeLillo, Thomas Pynchon, Norman Mailer and William S. Burroughs) as 'cybernetic fiction', 'chaos fiction', 'quantum fiction' and the 'system novel' respectively.²⁴ I will here retain the use of the term 'postmodern', but it is true to say that many of the theoretical underpinnings of the 'new sciences' articulate a vision of the world that is remarkably similar to that proposed by postmodern fiction and philosophy. Philosophers of science such as Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend articulate a kind of epistemological suspicion that has affinities with that of postmodernism, remarking that science is formed by its own assumptions and the particular language of its discourse.²⁵ Scientific theories such as Niels Bohr's principle of complementarity (which holds that light can be understood to be either a wave or a particle depending on the methods used to test it, this usually being contingent upon the way in which it is most fruitful to describe it), Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle (which states that ~~that~~ one cannot measure both the position and momentum of a subatomic particle at the same time), and Gödel's theorem (which proves that a logical system cannot be both consistent and complete) have been viewed by many as forming a new critique of representation that complements the discourses of critical theory.²⁶ As will become clear, the works of postmodern authors such as Don DeLillo, Thomas Pynchon and William S. Burroughs exhibit a great deal of knowledge of contemporary scientific discourse, both through external narrative presentation and through thematic incorporation of this knowledge in narrative forms.

As a preliminary example of this second point, it is worthwhile to note David Porush's statement that both postmodern literature and the 'new sciences' display a "distrust of

²⁴ See (Porush 1985), (Hayles 1991a), (Hayles 1990), (Strehle 1992), (LeClair 1987) and (LeClair 1989). It is also worth noting that postmodern author and critic John Barth has dedicated significant energy toward exploring the extent of correlation between postmodernism and chaos theory. See particularly (Barth 1995 c1991).

²⁵ See particularly (Kuhn 1970) and (Feyerabend 1988 c1975). Damien Broderick's *The Architecture of Babel* presents a summarisation of some of the issues involved, focusing upon the prominence of textual concerns: "Increasingly, both literary and scientific meta-theorists are coming to view their objects of study as principally *textual*, as constructed *narratives* which operate within social formations via processes of canonisation and negotiation" (Broderick 1994, px).

²⁶ See (Bohr 1991 c1958), (Heisenberg 1991 c.1927) and (Gödel 1962). It is interesting to note Gödel's theorem in particular, in that it directly (and drastically) undermined the validity of Whitehead and Russell's logical positivist 'project-to-end-all-projects', the *Principia Mathematica*, and has been cited by both Derrida, in his explication of deconstructionist philosophy, and Lyotard, as an example of the delegitimation of knowledge based in metalanguage. See (Derrida 1981 c1972, p219) and (Lyotard 1984 c1979, p42-43).

making sense out of the world through the application of system" (Porush 1991, p64).²⁷ This point once again refers us to the analogous relation of postmodern world and text. According to Peter Stoicheff, if we take into consideration the belief that the world itself is chaotic, then, whereas the fracturing, anti-mimetic drive of postmodern fiction begins "with a distaste for purportedly referential or realistic literature ... , in its reaction against such [it] nevertheless manifests the structures of the chaotic phenomenal world" (Stoicheff 1991, p94). Importantly, this is not seen as constituting a fundamental change in the nature of the universe itself. As N. Katherine Hayles remarks: "The change is not in how the world actually is ... but how it is seen" (Hayles 1991b, p8)..²⁸ The importance of hermeneutic concerns,²⁹ of looking precisely at the act of 'looking' at the world and of interpreting the act of viewing (itself an interpretative act) is highlighted by Hayles's statement: "An important turning point in the science of chaos occurred when complex systems were conceptualised as systems rich in information rather than poor in order" (Hayles 1991b, p6). For it the act of conceptualising chaos as positive rather than negative that is of prime significance here.

In addition to the description in *Paradise Lost* of "In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth / Rose out of Chaos" (Milton 1989 c1968—book 1, lines 9-10). Milton also associates chaos with evil. 'The Argument' to the first book of *Paradise Lost* describes Hell as: "a place of utter darkness, fitliest call'd Chaos". This association is also supported by St. Augustine's definition of evil as a lack or corruption of order, viewing evil negatively rather than seeing it in Manichean fashion as a positive force in its own right.³⁰ This association of evil with chaos (as lack of order) is further explicated by Norbert Wiener, an

²⁷ On this point one might note Lyotard's creation of 'paralogy' in *The Postmodern Condition*, lumping together quantum mechanics, Gödel's theorem, irreversible thermodynamics, and fractal geometry, as a new kind of science which will "let us wage a war on totality" (Lyotard 1984 c1979, p82).

²⁸ With regards to the distinction between effective reality (the lived world) and sensible reality (the world of things), the relevant change is in effective reality rather than in sensible reality. As one character in Don DeLillo's *MAO II* remarks, "[w]hat we have in front of us represents one thing. How we analyse and codify it is something else completely" (DeLillo 1992 c1991, p222).

²⁹ The distinction between effective reality and sensible reality is foregrounded and interrogated by modern hermeneutics. As Jean Grondin writes, "Beginning at least with Nietzsche's insight into universal perspectivism ('there are no facts, only interpretations'), addressing the problem posed by this omnipresence has been the order of the day for philosophy. Nietzsche is probably the first modern author to have made us conscious of the fundamentally interpretative character of our experience of the world.... The interpretative tendency was furthered by ... Kant's distinction between phenomena and things in themselves: knowledge is not a reflection of things as they are, independent of us; it is a schematised and interested construction of phenomena" (Grondin 1994 c1991, p13). What particularly distinguishes the postmodern understanding of the world, as Habermas has pointed out, is its self-reflexivity, the fact that it consciously recognises itself as an interpretation: "Our knowledge knows about itself as knowledge and interpretation of the world as well. It does not identify itself with the world itself or its mere reflection" (Grondin 1994 c1991, p14).

³⁰ See particularly (Augustine 1961, book 7).

early theorist of cybernetics, in his discussion of the place of chaos in the universe: "this random element, this organic incompleteness, is one which without too violent a figure of speech we may consider evil; the negative evil which St. Augustine characterises as incompleteness, rather than the positive malicious evil of the Manicheans" (Wiener 1954, p11). It is less easy to so readily characterise the positive (Manichean) chaos of the postmodern text as a manifestation of evil. According to N. Katherine Hayles, the postmodern vision of positive chaos is often deployed by poststructuralists in order to destabilise oppressive structures of ideological order.³¹ However, this positive form of chaos does have distinct similarities with the state of schizophrenia, which Jung describes as "an apparent chaos of incoherent visions, voices, and characters, all of an overwhelmingly strange and incomprehensible nature" (Jung 1960 c1906b, p236). This schizophrenic chaos, whilst certainly not definable as 'evil', is seen to constitute a threat to the coherence of the self.

On numerous occasions Jung describes the experience of clinical schizophrenia as being akin to the loss of foundations, leading to the threat of chaotically decentred "unsystematic randomness" and a loss of self (Jung 1960 c1906d, p257):

It is as if the very foundations of the psyche were giving way, as if an explosion or an earthquake were tearing asunder the structure of a normally built house. (Jung 1960 c1906b, p240)

... [the] schizophrenic must always reckon with the possibility that his very foundations will give way somewhere, that an ir retrievable disintegration will set in, that his ideas and concepts will lose their cohesion and their connection with other spheres of association and with the environment. As a result, he feels threatened by an uncontrollable chaos of chance happenings. He stands on treacherous ground, and very often he knows it. (Jung 1960 c1906d, p259)

At times, explications of the postmodern metaphor of schizophrenia closely resemble such descriptions of clinical schizophrenia. Take, for two examples, a passage in Baudrillard's *The Ecstasy of Communication* and a description of a first-hand experience of clinical schizophrenia:

... too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him anymore ... the absolute proximity, the total instantaneity of things, the feeling of no defence, no retreat. It is the end of interiority and intimacy, the overexposure and transparency of the world which traverses him without obstacle. (Baudrillard 1993 c1983, p132-133)

It struck me that if I stared long enough at the environment that I would blend with it and disappear just as if the place was empty and I had disappeared. It is as if you get yourself to feel you don't know who you are or where you are. To blend into the scenery so to speak. Then, you are scared of it because it becomes to

³¹ See particularly (Hayles 1990, pp22-23, 176-177).

come on without encouragement. I would just be walking along and felt that I had blended with the landscape.
(Laing 1960, p118)

According to Deleuze⁶and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, theories of schizophrenia have traditionally been formulated in three parts: 'dissociation', 'space-time/being-in-the-world', and 'autism' (Deleuze 1977, p22). These three traits are all expressed, in formulations of postmodern schizophrenia, as relating to that threat to the coherence of the self that constitutes the schizophrenic condition.

The schizophrenic trope of 'dissociation' relates primarily to the self's experience of the fragmented, dissociated state of the postmodern world. Fredric Jameson defines his metaphor of postmodern schizophrenia in such a fashion as the immersion of the subject in "a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers" (Jameson 1991, p119). That this situation is peculiar to the postmodern era, according to Jameson, is an effect of what he terms 'late capitalism', being "a symptom of the deeper structural changes in our society and its culture as a whole" (Jameson 1998a, p50). The all-expansive system of 'late capitalism', described by Jameson as "a kind of virus, ... its development ... something like an epidemic" (Jameson 1998a, p140) is presented as expanding into all available spaces, penetrating the fabric of the postmodern world so that it constitutes its very warp and woof, to the extent that "the entire world is suddenly sewn up into a total system from which no one can secede" (Jameson 1998a, p91).

The pertinence of this all-embracing system of late capitalism is by no means delimited to the realms of economic or monetary concerns. Not only has the more simple regime of a monetary economy given way to the ever more complex ebb and flow of capital within the domain of information technology (as Jameson argues, whilst money in itself is an abstract concept, "nothing is quite so abstract as the finance capital which underpins and sustains postmodernity as such" (Jameson 1998a, p149)) but literally everything has become subsumed by the system into an economy of cultural production. Globalisation has formed a kind of cyberspace in which capital "has reached its ultimate dematerialisation, as messages which pass instantaneously across the former globe, the former material world" (Jameson 1998a, p154). As Jameson argues, this results in the fact that

... any comprehensive new theory of finance capitalism will need to reach out into the expanded realm of cultural production to map its effects: indeed mass cultural production and consumption themselves – at one with globalisation and the new information technology – are as profoundly economic as the other productive areas of late capitalism, and as fully integrated into the latter's generalised commodity system.
(Jameson 1998a, p144)

However, it is the inability of the individual to be able to coherently conceptualise (or escape from) this infinitely complex all-embracing system of finance capitalism, information technology, and cultural production that situates him/her in an alienated

position within it, the postmodern world appearing, without a semblance of conceivable conceptual coherence, as a fragmented "rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers" (Jameson 1991, p119). According to Jameson, the situation of the postmodern individual is thus akin to an experience of "the metaphysics of existential disorder; the 'mess' of schizophrenic filled time without any spaces for withdrawal or distance" (Jameson 1992a, p63).

Richard Sennett's book *The Corrosion of Character: The Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, similarly argues that a schizophrenic fragmentation of time is implicated in this disconnected vision of the postmodern world, emphasising the dissociation of time that accompanies the individual's inability to comprehend the decentred structures of late capitalist society. As Sennett argues, the emphasis on the use of new technologies and the prominence of global marketplaces as the hallmarks of the 'new capitalism' often misses another dimension of change; in particular, new ways of organising time (Sennett 1998, p22). According to Sennett, changes in modern institutional structures have created a fluidly chaotic scene of discontinuity and structural insecurity. This uncertainty is "woven into the everyday processes of a vigorous capitalism" and constitutes a threat to the maintenance of a coherent sense of selfhood, "the experience of disjointed time threatening the ability of people to form their characters into sustained narratives" (Sennett 1998, p31):

How can a human being develop a narrative of identity and life history in a society composed of episodes and fragments? The conditions of the new economy feed instead on experience which drifts in time ... threatens to corrode his character, particularly those qualities of character which bind human beings to one another and furnishes them with a sense of sustainable self.
(Sennett 1998, p26-27)

As Sennett remarks about the threat to the self constituted by the development of new capitalism: "The psyche dwells in a state of endless becoming—a selfhood which is never finished. There can be under these conditions no coherent life narrative, no clarifying moment of change illuminating the whole" (Sennett 1998, p133). These ways of experiencing the fragmented postmodern world are somewhat akin to Jung's description of the dissociated inner state of the schizophrenic as like "a mirror broken up into splinters" (Jung 1960 c1906b, p235), threatening the schizophrenic with the loss of "psychic totality" and inspiring the task of the "maintenance of the potential unity of the personality" (Jung 1960 c1906b, p234-235). Just as Sennett records the testimony of one person who remarks to him, "Things have to hold together, ... Otherwise it's just a jumble of images" (Sennett 1998, p26), according to Jung, "schizophrenia shows a picture of unsystematic randomness, so to speak, in which the continuity of meaning ... [is] mutilated to the point of unintelligibility", threatening to "burst asunder the inner cohesion of the personality" (Jung 1960 c1906d, p257).

The second trope of schizophrenia mentioned by Deleuze and Guattari, 'space-time/being-in-the-world', in theories of postmodern schizophrenia is primarily related to this dissociation of time and involved in the metamorphosis of extended time into a series of "pure and unrelated presents in time" (Jameson 1991, p27). N. Katherine Hayles is explicit on this metaphorical conjunction of schizophrenia and postmodernism: "To live postmodernism is to live as schizophrenics are said to do, in a world of disconnected present moments that jostle one another but never form a continuous (much less logical) progression" (Hayles 1990, p282). Frank Kermode writes of this postmodern 'schizophrenic timelessness' as being less a fragmentation of time than a loss of 'real' time, wherein "the 'specious present' is indefinitely lengthened", occurring in the same manner in which "schizophrenics ... lose contact with 'real' time, and undergo what has been called 'a transmutation of the present into eternity'" (Kermode 1967, p54-55). In both cases, however, the existential-linguistic relation present in what Jameson describes as a "connection between this kind of linguistic malfunction and the psyche of the schizophrenic", is to be understood as asserting the proposition that personal identity is the effect of conceptual unification of the past and future with the present, and that such unification is a function of language (Jameson 1991, p26). Lacan's theory of certain psychotic conditions as a breakdown in the signifying chain which constitutes meaning, focuses upon this sort of linguistic construction of subject.³² For Lacan, the subject is constituted as a subject by language. Lacan's focus upon the fundamental discontinuity between the chains of meaning of signifier and signified and the primacy of the structured network of the signifier over that of the signified, rests on the grounds that relations between signifiers generate the signified. Thus a breakdown in the temporal relations between signifiers signals a crisis in generating the meaning of the subject. The relationship of signifiers can no longer represent a subject for another signifier, a linguistic relation inherent in the unconscious formation of the self as signifier: "The subject is born insofar as the signifier emerges in the field of the Other [the unconscious]. But by this fact, this subject—which was previously nothing if not a subject coming into being—solidifies into a signifier" (Lacan 1977 c1973, p199). The subject cannot be considered the agent of speech, it is rather through the 'agency of the letter in the unconscious'³³ that language speaks the subject. The subject is the effect of discourse. Therefore a breakdown in the syntagmic (combinatory) series of signifiers occasions a breakdown in the constitution of the subject.

³² See particularly (Lacan 1977 c1956).

³³ This is the title of one of Lacan's most famous writings in which his theories concerning the primacy of the signifier over the signified and the discontinuity between the two realms are expressed. These factors cause him to ask the question of the location of the meaning of the subject: "Is the place that I occupy as the subject of a signifier concentric or excentric, in relation to the place I occupy as subject as subject of the signified?" (Lacan 1977 c1957, p165).

That the schizophrenic loses his/her sense of self within, and as a consequence of this (un-)relation of time inherent in "an undifferentiated vision of the world in the present" (Jameson 1993 c1983, p120) is also expressed by Laing's writings on the schizophrenic's task of defending the integrity of the identity of the self. Whilst arguing for the primacy of spatial concerns to the schizophrenic,³⁴ Laing also focuses upon the importance of insecure temporal relations as the cause of an unstable sense of identity:

When there is uncertainty of identity in time, there is a tendency to rely on spatial means of identifying oneself....However, sometimes the greatest reliance may be placed on the awareness of oneself in time. This is especially so when time is experienced as a succession of moments. The loss of a section of the linear temporal series through inattention to one's time-self may be felt as catastrophe. (Laing 1960, p116)

The final trait of schizophrenia to be examined here, 'autism', occurs as a reaction to the threatening 'dissociation' of schizophrenia. Conceptions of this 'autism' as a defensive reaction against the dangerous confusion of dissociation are proposed by both R.D. Laing and Melanie Klein. Laing sees autism as the schizophrenic's ploy to shore-up the boundaries of self against the fear of becoming "a chaotic non-entity" (Laing 1960, p80), a fear inherent in his/her relation of transparency to the violent penetrations of the world:

[The self], in order to develop and sustain its identity and autonomy, and in order to be safe from the persistent threat and danger from the world, has cut itself off from direct relatedness with others, and has endeavoured to become its own object: to become, in fact, related directly only to itself. (Laing 1960, p149-150)

According to Melanie Klein's paper *Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms*, which investigates in detail the anxiety of the 'mental mechanism' of the splitting of the self (manifest in early infancy but recurring in the schizophrenic as feelings of a persecutory nature), the schizophrenic's anxiety is the result of being faced with a similarly dangerous immersion in the world (though here expressed in Klein's chosen discourse of 'object-relations' as being itself an 'object'):

I hold that anxiety arises from the operation of the death instinct within the organism, is felt as fear of annihilation (death) and takes the form of fear of persecution. The fear of the destructive impulse seems to attach itself at once to an object—or rather it is experienced as the fear of an uncontrollable, overpowering object. (Klein 1975 c1946, p4)

In the next part of this section, I will examine an example of the processes of postmodern schizophrenia (outlined above) presented by Don DeLillo's novel *White Noise*. *White*

³⁴ Noted here is the primacy of spatial metaphors that mark conceptualisation of the postmodern subject. See particularly Scott Bukatman's *Terminal Identity* (Bukatman 1993, chapter 2—"Terminal Space") and Klinkowitz's *Structuring the Void* (Klinkowitz 1992, chapter 7—"Beyond Time's Constraint: Spatial Form"). The primacy of the spatial, however, has been shown to have been occasioned precisely by this breakdown of the temporal. As Jameson states in an interview with Anders Stephanson, "Time

Noise has been taken by many critics as being an almost paradigmatic expression of the postmodern scene, particularly as elaborated by such theorists as Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson.³⁵ With its presentation of the mystical power of the omnipresent television within the Gladney home; litanies of consumerist mantras; discussions of supermarkets as places of semi-religious significance; rapt absorption in the deathlessly violent spectacles of aeronautical disaster footage and car crashes; futuristic drugs; popular cultural artifacts such as tabloid magazines and movie icons; and proliferations of simulation and simulacra, *White Noise* is a perfect candidate for discussion of the peculiarities of the postmodern era. Related to this is the fact that its date of publication, in 1984, marks not only the start of popular recognition of DeLillo as an accomplished author (sealed in 1997 with the publication of the critically applauded *Underground*) but also an increase in attention to the notion of postmodern schizophrenia. That two seminal essays containing theories of postmodern schizophrenia, Baudrillard's 'The Ecstasy of Communication' and Jameson's 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', appeared almost immediately prior to *White Noise* have obviously contextualised readings of the novel. In fact, these texts are extremely useful in developing an understanding of the novel; but *White Noise* is more than a simple explication of these particular theories of postmodern schizophrenia. This said, *White Noise* does present a useful example of the processes of postmodern schizophrenia as they have been outlined above. As will become clear, the protagonist of *White Noise*, Jack Gladney, is threatened by the chaotic dissociation of the postmodern world and is unable to construct meaningfully coherent explanations in order to orient himself within it. He attaches his fear of the destructive chaos of the world to the 'uncontrollable, overpowering object' of death. As an 'autistic' defensive reaction to the threat to his self that the chaos of the world poses, he attempts to develop a form of self-sustaining identity, utilising the operations of language to separate his self from the chaotic real in order to become an entirely self-directed being.

It might be said that Deleuze and Guattari's account of the schizophrenic's convolution of 'word' and 'thing'³⁶ sets postmodern schizophrenia apart from the 'schizophrenic' quality of the writings of Kafka, which were said to lie in the schismatic division of language from the 'real'. The conception of truth as the representational correspondence of knowledge to

has become a perpetual present and thus spatial. Our relationship to the past is now a spatial one" (Stephanson 1991, p70).

³⁵ See particularly Leonard Wilcox's article 'Baudrillard, DeLillo's 'White Noise' and the End of Heroic Narrative', and Cornell Bonca's 'Don DeLillo's White Noise: The Natural of the Species' (Bonca 1996) (Wilcox 1991).

³⁶ As Deleuze and Guattari write, "Freud doesn't like schizophrenics. He doesn't like their resistance to being Oedipalized, and tends to treat them more or less like animals. They mistake words for things, he says. They are apathetic, narcissistic, cut off from reality, incapable of achieving transference; they resemble philosophers—"an undesirable resemblance" (Deleuze 1977, p23).

reality, of language to the world, in such postmodern theorisations is effaced by the repudiation of "the great semiotic opposition between signifier and signified", wherein "depth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces" (Jameson 1991, p12). This emphasis upon lack of depth and multiplicity of surfaces is what points writers such as Jameson, Lyotard, Lacan and Baudrillard toward a conception of postmodern schizophrenia as the post-Saussurean pathology of disconnected and isolated signifiers. It is for this reason that Baudrillard argues that we are now entering a new stage of history, one that necessitates a move away from "[dreams] of a happy conjunction of an idea [that existed] in the shadow of Enlightenment and of modernity, in the heroic ages of critical thought" (Baudrillard 1994c, p2). The basis for Baudrillard's argument lies in his notion of 'the loss of the real'. As Douglas Kellner writes: "Baudrillard claims that in the postmodern world the boundary between image or simulation and reality implodes, and with this the very experience and ground of 'the real' disappears" (Kellner 1992, p5). The 'loss of the real' is thus the end of representation (of the 'real'), the new order being that of the 'hyperrealism of simulation': "what was projected psychologically and mentally, what used to be lived out on earth as metaphor, as mental or metaphorical scene, is henceforth projected into reality, without any metaphor at all, into an absolute space which is also that of simulation" (Baudrillard 1993 c1983, p128).

The classic example in *White Noise* of the 'loss of the real' is the much cited episode of "THE MOST PHOTOGRAPHED BARN IN AMERICA"³⁷. As Jack Gladney and Murray Siskind drive to the barn, Jack's first-person narrative presents a listless and bored description of the Mid-Western countryside. Despite the potentially interesting envelopment in 'nature' that one might expect to find in driving "twenty-two miles into the country around Farmington" (a town that even linguistically denotes itself as a 'farming-town'), Jack only manages to note: "There were meadows and apple orchards. White fences trailed through the rolling fields" (WN, p12). The tedium of the clichéd 'rolling fields' is soon broken, however, with a contrasting sense of anticipation as the barn approaches: "Soon the signs started appearing ... We counted five signs before we reached the site" (WN, p12). All these signs point to the barn. But, as Murray points out, it is precisely because of these signs that "'No one sees the barn'": "'Once you've seen the signs about the barn it becomes impossible to see the barn'" (WN, p12). The signs that present the barn as being 'the most photographed barn in America' effectively efface the existence of the barn-in-itself: the barn as a 'real' object. Before becoming 'the most photographed barn in America', the barn was presumably just another 'barn in the country', no different from any other barn that, one would suspect, could only elicit from Jack as bored and indifferent a narrative response as 'rolling fields.' As Murray points out, the barn's entry into the realm

³⁷ (DeLillo 1986 c1985, p12-13). All further references to this text will be indicated parenthetically, marked 'WN'.

of image excludes the possibility of viewing the barn apart from its status as 'the most photographed barn in America':

'What was the barn like before it was photographed?' he said. 'What did it look like, how was it different from other barns, how was it similar to other barns? We can't answer these questions because we've read the signs, seen the people snapping pictures. We can't get outside the aura. We're part of the aura. We're here, we're now.'
(WN, p12-13)

This type of effacement of the object by its simulacrum³⁸ or simulated self is evident throughout *White Noise*. But, whereas this episode alludes to the effacement of the concept of the 'real' and its elevation into the simulacrum 'aura' of the here and now, the postmodern "perpetual present" (Jameson 1993 c1983, p125), as will be shown, the implied finality of the 'loss of the real' does not occur in the novel.

An integral part of Baudrillard's concept of the 'loss of the real' is his concept of 'implosion', denoting the inward collapse of images and objects into an undifferentiated flux of simulations without referents. Also related to this is Jameson's notion of the postmodern "effacement [of] key boundaries or separations" (Jameson 1993 c1983, p112), three 'implosions' of previously oppositionary conceptual realms (nature/culture, inner/outer and subject/object) that come to constitute the 'hyperreal' postmodern world. In *White Noise*, the previously dualistic conceptual realms of nature/culture, inner/outer and subject/object have become conjoined, forming the disconnected elements of the postmodern world. This all-pervading chaotic mess schizophrenically penetrates the mind, body and environment of Jack Gladney, constituting, in Baudrillard's words, "the overexposure and transience of the world which traverses him without obstacle" (Baudrillard 1993 c1983, p132-133). Descriptive presentations of the postmodern landscape of *White Noise* overtly focus on the colonisation of nature by cultural artificiality. Take, for example, Jack's drive through Iron City (this time a 'city of iron' rather than the 'farming town' of the barn episode) with his ex-wife Tweedy:

We got Tweedy's luggage, went out to the car and drove through Iron City, past deserted factories, on mainly deserted avenues, a city of hills, occasional cobbled streets, fine old homes here and there, holiday wreaths in the windows ...We were travelling parallel to railroad tracks. The weeds were full of Styrofoam cups, tossed from train windows or wind-blown north from the depot.
(WN, p87)

Here the effacement of nature/culture boundaries is evidently consummated, the passage's descriptive transition from city (culture) to outlying country (nature) marking no

³⁸ A simulacrum is a copy without an original, defying conventional representational logic in having no essential referential or mimetic origin. Although it may be said that 'the most photographed barn in America' has as its origin the ordinary barn preceding its status as 'most photographed', the simulacrum barn is not so much a representation of the ordinary barn as it is a re-presentation of it. The simulacrum barn is not a representational image of the barn, as a painting or drawing of the barn might be, but the barn itself reconstituted as image.

significant break between the two realms. In both city and country, the conceptual realms of culture and nature are conflated. Hills are presented as cultural artifacts, as 'cities of hills', whereas Styrofoam cups are associated with the unwanted weeds of the country. Weeds themselves are displaced and traversed by tumbleweed-like, 'wind-blown' Styrofoam cups that are now as much a part of the fully colonised natural landscape as railroad tracks. The previously distinct realms of nature and culture have been imploded in a postmodern scene where there is no longer any distinction between nature and culture, but rather: "CABLE HEALTH, CABLE WEATHER, CABLE NEWS, *CABLE NATURE*. " (WN, p231—my emphasis)³⁹ This conjunction of the realms of nature and culture expresses the totalising embrace of consumerist capitalism, the vast system of global capitalism from which there can be no secession, a system that penetrates the fabric of the world to the extent that it has come to constitute its very nature.

The effacement of inner/outer boundaries in *White Noise* presents a parallel colonisation of the inner mind by the external signifiers of consumerist capitalism, of which the occurrence of 'CABLE NATURE' is an example. It appears in the narrative as a subliminal intrusion that is unmediated by speech or quotation markings, as do numerous litanies of brand-names and advertising slogans: "The Airport Marriot, the Downtown Travelodge, the Sheraton Inn and Conference Centre" (WN, p15), "Dacron, Orlon, Lycra Spandex" (WN, p51), "Mastercard, Visa, American Express" (WN, p100), "Leaded, Unleaded, Super Unleaded" (WN, p199). These consumerist tags of pseudo-objects appear within the text as free-floating signifiers without contextual or referential bases, in Jameson's words as a fragmented "rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers" (Jameson 1991, p119); representatives of the infinitely complex all-embracing system of finance capitalism, information technology and cultural production that constitutes the chaotic mess of the postmodern world.

Whilst the above intrusions are presented as being representatives of a recognisably subliminal level of discourse, the deeper subconscious mind surfacing into the open spaces of narrative text in what Frank Lentricchia calls "an unconscious epistemology of consumption" (Lentricchia 1991c, p105), examples of 'pastiche'⁴⁰ within the novel present characters utilising the language of mass media in attempts to meaningfully communicate

³⁹ Although similar situations are present within a vast bulk of postmodern literature, there is a particularly enlightening episode in Pynchon's *Vineland*. At one point in the novel, the reader learns that the inhabitants of a city are geographically defined by their relation to the "four shopping malls, named for points of the compass, that bracketed the city" (Pynchon 1991 c1990, p68). The 'natural' landscape is thus shown to be contained and defined not only by 'artificial' architecture (shopping malls being particularly postmodern cultural artifacts), but also by consumer culture.

⁴⁰ According to Jameson, pastiche is the "imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language ... [*Neutral* mimicry] without the satirical impulse ... without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic" (Jameson 1993 c1983, p114).

with each other. When interrogating his son, Heinrich, about an imprisoned mass murderer with whom Heinrich is corresponding, Jack resorts to the stock clichés and stereotypes of the six-o'clock news or an infotainment program:

'Did he care for his weapons obsessively? Did he have an arsenal stashed in his shabby little room off a six-story concrete car park? ... Did he fire from a highway overpass, a rented room? Did he walk into a bar, a washette, his former place of employment and start firing indiscriminately? [etc.]' (WN, p44)

Even before this passage, Jack relates his wife Babette's expression of her fear that Heinrich "will end up in a barricaded room, spraying hundreds of rounds of automatic fire across an empty mall before the SWAT teams come for him with their heavy-barrelled weapons, their bullhorns and body armour" (WN, p22). Not only does the language of the mass media traverse the minds of the characters of *White Noise*, but they themselves continually resort to it in their efforts to communicate, to question the world around them, and to express their hopes and fears, reducing their very real concerns about the threats posed by the postmodern world to the banal level of unreal mass media cultural productions.

At one point in the novel, rummaging through his family's garbage, Jack asks himself:

Was this ours? Did it belong to us? Had we created it? ... But why did I feel like a household spy? Is garbage so secret? Does it glow at the core with personal heat, with signs of one's deepest nature, clues to secret yearnings, humiliating flaws? What habits, fetishes, addictions, inclinations? What solitary acts, behavioural ruts? ... Was this the dark underside of consumer consciousness? (WN, p258-259)

The inner realm of the subconscious is here shown to have been externalised and commodified. Jameson recognises this sort of effacement as a repudiation of "the Freudian model of latent and manifest, or of repression", related to the effacement of the hermeneutic model of 'inside' and 'outside' (Jameson 1991, p12). The 'dark underside of consumer consciousness' expressed in Jack's ironically pseudo-Freudian findings ("I found crayon drawings of a figure with full breasts and male genitals ... I found a banana skin with a tampon inside" (WN, p259)) is far from the dark, subconscious 'inner mind' of the Freudian man. The chaotic detritus of the human psyche is here seen to be on the same level as bodily detritus, both being little more than the unrelated objects of consumerist capitalism that are subsumed by the garbage can in the end: "I came across a horrible clotted mass of hair, soap, ear swabs, crushed roaches, flip-top rings, sterile pads smeared with pus and bacon fat, strands of frayed dental floss, fragments of ballpoint refills, toothpicks still displaying bits of impaled food" (WN, p259). In an era when there actually exists a brand of pseudo-psychological/sociological research called 'garbology', the realms of the inner and outer human being, the private and public realms,⁴¹ and even mind and

⁴¹ Further on this point is the 'domestication of Hitler' mentioned by Paul Cantor in the convergence of the public (political) and private (domestic) evident when Jack brings his copy of *Mein Kampf* to family outings (WN, pp57, 95), and Jack's statement, "We couldn't have television without him [i.e. Hitler]"

body have become effaced, the subject appearing, as Lyotard writes, "at nodal points of specific communication circuits ... always located at a post through which various kinds of messages pass" (Lyotard 1984 c1979, p15). As Baudrillard puts it: "It is the end of interiority and intimacy ... He is now only a pure screen, a switching centre for all the networks of influence" (Baudrillard 1993 c1983, p133). This schizophrenic traversal of the subject by the 'rubble of signifiers' of the postmodern world is also particularly evident in DeLillo's first novel, *Americana*, the protagonist of which is a television executive who not only spends the great bulk of his time on the telephone but is actually named David Bell, alluding to the inventor of the telephone, Alexander Graham Bell.

That this schizophrenic relation to the postmodern world relates to the threatening dissociation of time, to the fragmentation of extended time into a series of "pure and unrelated presents in time" (Jameson 1991, p27) is evident when considering DeLillo's portrayal of the particular 'loss of history' that afflicts the characters of *White Noise*. Both Jameson's and Baudrillard's statements on the ahistorical nature of postmodern existence, particularly in its relationship to the self-referential images of the mass media, have obvious parallels in Murray's reflections on the 'mystical' nature of TV: "I've come to understand that the medium is a primal force in the American home. Sealed-off, timeless, self-contained, self-referring" (WN, p51). The 'timeless'-ness of the medium, as it relates to the postmodern 'end of history' has been fully realised by the characters of *White Noise*. As Murray says of the barn: "'We can't get outside the aura. We're part of the aura. We're here. We're now'" (WN, p13). That Jack cannot escape his televisually ahistorical consciousness is demonstrated by his imaginative musings on Genghis Khan's romantically heroic attitude towards death. Jack's mental picture of Khan is not of the fifth century historical entity, but of the "Scourge of God ... wrapped in animal skins, as in some internationally financed movie epic", complete with pathos-ridden melodramatic dialogue "as the camera pulls back out of the tent and pans across the night sky of the fifth century A.D., clear and uncontaminated, bright-banded with shimmering worlds" (WN, p99-100). In a sense, the question that Babette's father, Vernon, asks Jack—"Were people this dumb before television?" (WN, p249)—cannot be answered by characters within the novel.⁴²

(WNp63) giving the domestic television a reliance upon a political/public figure (Cantor 1991). Television itself has been noted by Baudrillard as conflating the public and the private. See particularly (Baudrillard 1993 c1983).

⁴² Vernon's importance in *White Noise* as a character who exposes the Gladney's postmodern "historical amnesia" (Jameson 1993 c1983, p125) is evident when Jack's romantic musings on the emotional significance attached to Vernon's visit ("What an epic force he must have seemed to her, taking shape in her kitchen this way, a parent, a father with all the grist of years on him, the whole dense history of associations and connections, come to remind her who she was, to remove her disguise, grab hold of her maundering life for a time, without warning" (WN, p247)) are farcically contrasted to the reality of the event as it is played out. Here there is not only a parodic interpretation of a type of Lyotardian functionality when the immediate question posed by Babette is "Where will you sleep?" (WN, p247), but, more importantly, the fact that even this remaining (trivial) historical point is lost to both: "Where did I sleep last time?" They both looked at me trying to remember" (WN, p247).

White Noise presents characters bereft of a position 'outside' television where one can stand in order to meaningfully interrogate history. There is now no history *without* television. History is mediated by the mass media, forming its content as well as its lack of temporal contextuality.⁴³

Jack Gladney is alienated by this dissociation of time, particularly by the threat it poses to his sense of personal history: the narrative that organises and grants cohesion to his sense of selfhood. At one point in the novel, Jack actually encounters a 'data profile' that is referred to as his 'history'. He is stunned upon learning of this technological representation of himself, a signifier of personal identity that has its centre outside himself. For this is a 'history' that the unremarkable young man he is talking to can 'tap into', yet which has remained hidden from himself:

I wondered what he meant when he said he'd tapped into my history. Where was it located exactly? ... Did he know about my wives, my involvement with Hitler, my dreams and fears?
(WN, p140)

Here Jack suffers a profound alienation from personal meaning. There is a seemingly unbridgeable schism between Jack and his 'history', and he feels that the components that constitute his essential self have been decentred from his actual person. He is the real who feels himself becoming subservient to the images, simulations and simulacra that have assumed authoritative priority over his meaning in much the same way that the SIMUVAC ('simulated evacuation') operation values real occurrences of toxic spills as an opportunity to rehearse simulation (WN, p139).

However, it is Jack's failure to understand the postmodern world, which appears without a semblance of conceivable conceptual coherence as a fragmented "rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers" (Jameson 1991, p119), that ultimately situates him in an alienated position toward it, leaving him in a situation akin to Jameson's description of "the metaphysics of existential disorder; the 'mess' of schizophrenic filled time without any spaces for withdrawal or distance" (Jameson 1992a, p119). The failure of the individual to coherently understand the postmodern world is expressed, in *White Noise*, in characters' numerous statements that 'knowledge changes every day'; in Heinrich's philosophical skepticism and relativistic uncertainty, expressed in debates over whether it is raining or not, couched in the distrust of the senses (WN, p23), linguistic relativism over the meaning of the term 'truth' (WN, p23) and the meaning of time (WN, p24) (even containing a

⁴³ In Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland*, this mediation of history is shown through the co-option of 1960s counter-culture into a set of stereotypical media images of 'hippie' activists "'two fingers in a V, hollerin, 'What's yer sign, man?' or singin' 'In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida' note for note'" (Pynchon 1991 c1990, p28). One character's knowledge of this period of American history is actually shown to be limited to "fast clips on the Tube meant to suggest the era, or distantly implied in reruns like 'Bewitched' and 'The Brady Bunch'" (Pynchon 1991 c1990, p198).

reference to the ex-centring of meaning in the 'Copernican revolution': "'You see the sun moving across the sky. But is the sun moving across the sky or is the earth turning?'" (WN, p24); in such interjections as: "'Animals commit incest all the time. So how unnatural can it be?'" (WN, p34); and the ultimate question, "'Isn't it just a question of brain chemistry?'" (WN, p45). The insecurity inspired by such incidents gives rise to an intensification of anxiety in both Jack and Babette, who vainly attempt to take refuge in the solid 'facts' of history, geology, Newtonian physics and Euclidean mathematics that they learnt at school (WN, p176). Against the perceived stability of this Euclidean world is Heinrich's presentation of the relativistic postmodern universe that is "'The whole point of Sir Albert Einstein'" (WN, p233): "'Basically there is no up or down, hot or cold, day or night'" (WN, p233). This is a universe where knowledge is unanchored, "'changes and grows every second of every day'", and "'floats in the air'", and where "'nobody actually knows anything'" (WN, p149) the constituents of understanding this power being beyond the realm of human comprehension: "'the major events in the universe can't be seen by the eye of man. It's waves, it's rays, it's particles'" (WN, p148). As Joseph Tabbi writes: "so the breakdown of the Newtonian paradigm may be reflected not only in the physical world and its narrative representations but also in an individual's private failure to construct a coherent personality" (Tabbi 1995, p113).

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It is the uncontrollable, overpowering object of death to which Jack attaches his fear of the threat to his self posed by this schizophrenic dissociation of the postmodern world. The resurfacing fears of death, felt within the text as the immanence of a hidden threat, almost as a continual 'return of the repressed', are as numerous and as fragmentarily uncontextualised within the novel as are the consumerist mantras discussed above. "We believed something lived in the basement" (WN, p27); "Who will die first?" (WN, p30); "A series of frightened children appeared at our door for their Halloween treats" (WN, p53); and "The chirping sound was just the radiator" (WN, p94) are but some of the many instances. Against this fear of death Jack seeks to achieve the heightened, deathless hyperreality of the image. This occurs as an 'autistic' defensive reaction to the threat that the chaos of the world poses, Jack utilising the operations of the image in repetitive attempts to escape from the threat by developing a form of self-sustaining identity.

It is Jameson's belief that the postmodern effacement or repudiation of boundaries includes in its mechanisms "the existential model of authenticity and inauthenticity whose heroic or tragic thematics are closely related to that other great opposition between alienation and disalienation, itself equally a casualty of the poststructural or postmodern period" (Jameson 1991, p12) that is questioned by the presentation of death in *White Noise*. For *White Noise*'s proto-postmodern representative, Murray J. Siskind, this may be

true.⁴⁴ For Jack, however, this is simply not the case. Jack's wholehearted attempts to achieve a form of existence in the realm of deathless simulacra, are dogged by a certain failure that implies a specific form of bad faith intimately related to Jean-Paul Sartre's discussion of the ruses of the self.⁴⁵ According to Sartre, the ideal project of the will is to recover itself in order to become an 'in-itself-for-itself' (Sartre 1969 c1956, p427). An example of such an object coincident with its authorial meaning is presented by *White Noise* when Jack notices the "self-conscious quality" of the fruit in the supermarket: "It looked carefully observed, like four-colour fruit in a guide to photography" (WN, p170). In that the fruit completely coincides with its image in a reality/simulacrum, nature/culture implosion of the purest postmodern moment, it might be said that the fruit has become a self-sustaining identity as it forms a Sartrean 'in-itself-for-itself'.

In that Jack's attempts to coincide with his ex-centred meaning are directed towards achieving an existence that coincides with an image-Other of the Self, it is useful to turn to Sartre's statement: "my project of recovering myself is fundamentally a project of absorbing the Other" (Sartre 1969 c1956, p340). Sartre comments that this project is constantly haunted by the indication of its goal being "an absolute-being which would be itself as other and other as itself and which by freely giving to itself its being-itself as other and its being-other as itself, would be the very being of the ontological proof—that is, God" (Sartre 1969 c1956, p341). Despite the fact that Sartre was not considering the possibilities of the mass media to provide free-standing images of self, nor the all-pervasive consumerism of the late-twentieth-century, the notion of the Other as an element of Self that is illusory or imaginative is certainly not foreign to him.⁴⁶ The religious/spiritual

⁴⁴ Cornel Bonca relates numerous examples of Murray's lack of awe or dread in the face of death in contrast to Jack's 'fear and trembling': "[Murray], not Jack, is the true Baudrillardian man, the true ecstatic in the world of Communication. Immersed academically in 'American magic and dread,' he feels no dread himself" (Bonca 1996, p8).

⁴⁵ The novel does present a primarily *parodic* interpretation of consumerist 'bad faith' in presenting Babette's lapsed attempts to stick to a strict health-food diet. These continually cause her feelings of guilt, not simply because she fails to eat the food, but because it is constantly in view: "Wherever you look," Steffie said, 'There it is./She feels guilty if she doesn't buy it, she feels guilty if she buys it and doesn't eat it, she feels guilty when she sees it in the fridge, she feels guilty when she throws it away'" (WN, p7). Steffie's remark upon this form of bad faith, "It's like she smokes but she doesn't" (WN, p7) alludes to Sartre's famous formulation of the inevitability of bad faith as expressed by the figure of the smoker, who either denies his facticity in stating that he is not a smoker but one who simply partakes in the act of smoking, or denies his transcendence in typing himself as a smoker. This reading is backed up by Denise's allusion to the ruses of the self: "It's like she's trying to trick herself" (WN, p7). However, Jack's existential torpors over death and identity do appear to be authentic (no pun intended). His rumination upon changing his name to better serve his academic career as head of 'Hitler Studies' might be noted for its peculiar 'ring' of alienation from self: "J.A.K. Gladney, a tag I wore like a borrowed suit" (WN, p16). As Jack's later comment, made after similar advice to change his personal appearance demonstrates, his alienation is peculiar in that he grants his simulacrum self (his new name) authorial precedence over what would existentially be witnessed as his 'authentic' self: "I am the false character that follows the name around" (WN, p17).

⁴⁶ As well as Sartre's formulation of the feeling of the (absent) Other as constituting an imaginary Other (Sartre 1969 c1956, p253-258), see also the numerous formulations of 'the mirror stage' given by Lacan,

connotations involved in Sartre's presentation of this mode of self-sustained being are matched in *White Noise* by Jack's almost jealous descriptions of such self-sustained image-beings. During the episode in which Babette appears on the Gladney family's television, Jack's astonishment upon noticing that "The face on the screen was Babette's" (WN, p104) betrays a mystical attitude towards the operations of the technological image:

What did it mean? What was she doing there, in black and white, framed in formal borders? Was she dead, missing, disembodied? Was this her spirit, her secret self, some two-dimensional facsimile released by the power of technology, set free to glide through wavebands, through energy levels, pausing to say good-bye to us from the fluorescent screen?

A strangeness gripped me, a sense of psychic disorientation. It was her all right, the face, the hair, the way she blinks in rapid twos and threes. I'd seen her just an hour ago, eating eggs, but her appearance on the screen made me think of her as some distant figure from the past, some ex-wife and absentee mother, a walker in the mists of the dead. If she was not dead, was I? A two-syllable infantile cry, *ba-ba*, issued from the deeps of my soul.
(WN, p104)

Jack here identifies Babette as existing in a life-in-death state of autonomous self-sustained identity: "coming into being, endlessly being formed and reformed" in a distant 'sealed-off, timeless, self-contained, self-referring' technological afterlife beyond traditional conceptions of space and time. This initial, epiphanic shock comes to be parodically juxtaposed with Jack's anticlimactic disappointment when sound refuses to issue from the television, frustrating the Gladney family by effectively denying the transcendent-image simulacrum Babette a voice.

A similarly frustrated attempt to conjoin with an image of oneself also emerges in the novel's account of Jack taking his family on a shopping-sprees. Jack's "mood to shop" is prompted by an academic colleague recognising Jack apart from his carefully tended image as: "'A big, harmless, ageing, indistinct sort of guy'" (WN, p83) an event that causes Jack considerable anxiety. As the family excitedly wanders through the mall, Jack's description of the event implies a movement towards an image-existence, parodically alluding to the self-defined and self-defining autonomy involved in consumerist choice of product:⁴⁷

I kept seeing myself unexpectedly in some reflecting surface ... I filled myself out, found new aspects of myself, located a person I'd forgotten existed. Brightness settled around me ... Our images appeared on mirrored columns, in glassware and chrome, on TV monitors, in security rooms. I traded money for goods. The more money I spent, the less important it seemed. I was bigger than these sums. These

Merleau-Ponty and Laing which all describe the infant's recognition of an image outside the self as being part of the self as forming the initial stage of ego-integration.

⁴⁷ See particularly Jack's description of the ten-story shopping mall where choice, although titanic in size, is trivial in content: "We moved from store to store, rejecting not only items in certain departments, not only entire departments but whole stores, mammoth corporations that did not strike our fancy for one reason or another. There was always another store, three floors, eight floors, basement full of cheese graters and paring knives" (WN, p83-84).

sums poured off my skin like so much rain. These sums in fact came back to me in the form of existential credit.
(WN, p83-84)

The prominence of mirrors, reflections and images in this passage points to the dominance in Jack's mind of his existentially superior image-self. So does the note that "A band played live Muzak" (WN, p84): a 'real' band simulating simulated music, expressing the priority of the realm of simulation, simulacrum and image over the real. However, the episode ends with a despondent mood of unfulfilment: "We drove home in silence. We went to our respective rooms, wishing to be alone" (WN, p84). This leaves Jack with yet another vision of attempts to conjoin with the realm of simulacra. This time it is his daughter Steffie, in front of the TV set: "attempting to match the words [of the television] as they were spoken" (WN, p84).

Though

~~Those~~ these particular attempts to coincide with the images presented by the technology of mass media failed, the passage in which Jack's German teacher, Howard Dunlop, describes finding after his mother's death "a sense of peace and security" (WN, p55) in studying meteorology emphasises these characters' continuing belief in the possibility of the structuring and ordering operations of technology to provide safety from the chaos of the world:

'I saw a weather report on TV. A dynamic young man with a glowing pointer stood before a multicoloured satellite photo, predicting the weather for the next five days. I sat there mesmerised by his self-assurance and skill. It was as though a message was being transmitted from the weather satellite through that young man and then to me in my canvas chair. I turned to meteorology for comfort.'
(WN, p55)

In the above example, the operations of technology are believed by the characters within the novel to support and reinforce the stability of the subject's world-view. This sort of happily conjunctive relationship is even more evident when Jack goes to an automated teller machine to check his bank balance and finds the figure on the screen roughly the same as his own, laboriously achieved, estimate:

Waves of relief and gratitude flowed over me. The system had blessed my life. I felt its support and approval ... I sensed that something of deep personal value, but not money, not that at all, had been authenticated and confirmed ... The system was invisible, which made it all the more impressive, all the more disquieting to deal with. But we were in accord, at least for now.
(WN, p46)

However, this episode also highlights the distance between Jack and the 'invisible system'. Of course, there is a physical distance between Jack and "the mainframe sitting in a locked room in some distant city" (WN, p46), but there is also what might be termed a metaphysical or 'spiritual' distance. For Jack feels not only that this system holds the divine power to 'bless', 'confirm' and existentially 'authenticate' him, but also the immanent

possibility of its shutting him out just like the "deranged person" who is "escorted from the bank by two armed guards" (WN, p46).

White Noise presents characters' belief in technology as a prime mediating force, the importance of which results in the viewing of the images of technology and the mass media as authoritatively superior to the real.⁴⁸ However, the operations of technology ultimately fail to provide adequate representational images of the postmodern world in order to counter the schizophrenic threat that such a world poses to the self. Technological representations of death serve, in fact, as a major cause of Jack's alienation:

It is when death is rendered graphically, is televised so to speak, that you sense an eerie separation between your condition and yourself. A network of symbols has been introduced, an eerie awesome technology wrested from the gods. It makes you feel like a stranger in your own dying.
(WN, p142)⁴⁹

When there is such a lack of congruence between the subject and the realm of technology, this is shown to be the cause of feelings of existential alienation and schizophrenic confusion. In DeLillo's *Running Dog*, for example, one character implies that it is the inability to fully conceptualise technology that enforces an ex-centering of meaning—with correspondent feelings of existential guilt—forcing the subject into the position of an outsider.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ As well as the examples already given, the numerous episodes in *White Noise* where the fact that there is 'no media in Iron City' is lamented might also be noted. Heinrich's mass-murderer correspondent's failure to "go down in history" is said to be a result of the fact that "There is no media in Iron City" (WN, p45). That the victims of a nearly averted aeroplane disaster "went through all that for nothing" (WN, p92) is due to the same fact is expressed by Jack's daughter Bee. Even an evacuee at the hands of 'the airborne toxic event' bewails the loss of media mediated legitimisation of his suffering: "There's nothing on network ... No film footage, no live report ... Do they think that this is just television? ... Don't they know it's real? ... Even if there hasn't been great loss of life, don't we deserve some attention for our suffering, our human worry, our terror? Isn't fear news?" (WN, p162). As all of these instances serve to show, the images of the media are seen by the characters of *White Noise* as providing the grounds for the validation of lived experience and the bestowal of meaning upon personal events. These characters' dejected reactions upon their failed expectations of having their experiences recognised by the media is similar to Jack's reaction to the failure of his individual attempts to move into an image of himself.

⁴⁹ This excentering of meaning is, in *White Noise*, shown to be related to the existential concept of 'role' in that Jack worries that if he contradicts himself in front of doctors: "that they would lose interest in me ... take my dying for granted" (WN, p76). Authority and control are placed outside the self, controlled by 'medical authorities' in a sustained play of social role that comes to increasingly imply an irrevocable one-sided power relation, somewhat like the Hegelian Master/Slave relation. Of particular pertinence to this point is one doctor's comments to Jack, "People tend to forget they are patients ... But you are all permanent patients, like it or not. I am the doctor, you are the patient. Doctors don't cease being doctor at the close of day. Neither should patient" (WN, p260).

⁵⁰ On this point it is also interesting to note that the first paranoid described in medical literature, an eighteenth-century London Architect and follower of the theories of Franz Mesmer (the father of hypnotism) James Tilly Matthews, was stricken precisely by this fear of machines and technology. Matthews feared that 'air loom' machines, used by a gang of French Jacobean spies, was sucking thoughts out of his head. See (Siegel 1994, p74) and (McCrone 1993, p222). The vast bulk of case studies of paranoid schizophrenia exhibit this predominance of technology in paranoid's fears. Take, for

You can't escape investigation. The facts about you and your whole existence have been collected or are being collected ... Devices make us pliant. If *they* issue a print-out saying we're guilty, then we're guilty. But it goes deeper doesn't it? It's the presence alone, the very fact, the superabundance of technology, that makes us feel like we're committing crimes ... What enormous weight. What complex programs. And there's no one to explain it to us.
(DeLillo 1992, p93)

As Jameson writes of the paradox concerning the dual position of technology as both a tool for and object of understanding the postmodern world: "The technology of contemporary society ... seems to offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control [that is itself] even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp" (Jameson 1991, p37-38). During medical tests directed at determining the level of Jack's exposure to a potentially fatal toxic spill, Jack hears the recurrent phrase: "Knowledge changes every day" (WN, p280) as an excuse for technology's disturbing inability to coherently represent the possibility of his death any more clearly than as a 'nebulous mass': "It's called a nebulous mass because it has no definite shape, form or limits" (WN, p280). Jack faces a representation of his death that implies total lack of representation. His immanent death is an expression of what Lyotard describes as the task of the postmodern: to "put forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself ... in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable" (Lyotard 1984 c1979, p81). It is as a result of this utter unrepresentability of the chaotic postmodern world that Jack's attempts to fully coincide with his ex-centred image-meaning continually fail. According to Sartre, this failure to recover oneself by absorbing the Other is inevitable (Sartre 1969 c1956, p341). The failure of the project of coinciding with ex-centred meaning, according to Sartre, is in contrast to the wholeness of identity of the 'in-itself' object: "In the in-itself there is not a particle of being which is not wholly within itself without distance ... There is not the slightest emptiness in being, not the tiniest crack through which nothingness might slip in" (Sartre 1969 c1956, p50). The fact that Sartre's description of this project forms part of an explication of the machinations of love and language is telling.⁵¹ We might further extend this formulation of the Self's attempts to coincide with Other-as-Self as related to the project of recovering the meaning of one's language, which Laing sees as related to the schizophrenic's task of defending the boundaries of the schizoid self: "[t]he secondary verbal and conceptual task of reintegrating the various bits and pieces ... the despairing efforts of the schizophrenic to put his disintegrated self and world together" (Laing 1960, p18).

example, Jung's recounting of a nineteenth-century dressmaker who was taunted by voices that she described as being "invisible telephones" (Jung 1960 c1906a, p99). This case in particular establishes a close analogical connection between clinical schizophrenia and the communicational transparency of the postmodern subject.

⁵¹ See (Sartre 1969 c1956, p340-355—"First Attitude Towards Others: Love, Language, Masochism")

As Jack's attempts to come into existence in the realm of image fail, the question "Who will die first?" (WN, pp15,30, etc.) recurs as an inescapable feeling of immanent threat to the self (as Sartrean cracks through which nothingness spills). Jack and Babettes' fear of death eventually leads them into a form of linguistic collusion against death, a game of 'one-upmanship' constituting a strategy of naming death in order to render it powerless:

She claims my death would leave a bigger hole in her life than her death would in mine. This is the level of our discourse. The relative size of holes, abysses and gaps. We have serious arguments on this level. She says if her death is capable of leaving a large hole in my life, my death would leave an abyss in hers, a great yawning gulf. I counter with a profound depth or void.
(WN, p101)

The total inefficacy of this 'linguistic collusion' against death is evident in Murray's spout of death-naming: "The vast and terrible depth ... The inexhaustibility ... The whole huge nameless thing ... The massive darkness ... The whole terrible endless hugeness" (WN, p288). For despite Jack's self-assurance when replying to Murray ("Of course ... I understand ... Yes, absolutely ... Certainly, certainly ... I know exactly what you mean" (WN, p288)) these denotative attacks upon death are nothing more than an ineffective level of discourse. Different characters' belief in linguistic precision relating to an instrumental control over the external world is notable in much of DeLillo's fiction. In his musings upon his experiences in Vietnam in *Running Dog*, Earl Mudger remarks upon "[t]he comfort that men found in the argot of weaponry ... where technical idiom was often the only element of precision, the only true beauty he could take with him into realms of ambiguity... Reciting these names was the soldier's poetry, his counter-jargon to death" (DeLillo 1992, p208-209). In *Libra*, Lee Harvey Oswald believes that his failure to coherently express himself in writing is causally related to his failure to 'get a grip' on the world:

... the language tricked him with its inconsistencies. He watched sentences deteriorate, powerless to make them right. The nature of things was to be elusive. Things slipped through his perceptions. He could not get a grip on the runaway world.
(DeLillo 1988, p211)

The 'Airborne toxic event' episode in *White Noise* highlights similarly failed attempts to linguistically 'get a grip' on (and nullify) the dangerous death-power of a toxic cloud produced by the spillage of a derailed tank car. When the radio first describes the cloud as "a feathery plume", Heinrich retorts: "[I]t's not a plume ... [It is] Like a shapeless growing thing. A dark black breathing thing of smoke. Why do they call it a plume?" (WN, p111). Shortly after this, when Babette and then later Heinrich report: "They're not calling it a feathery plume anymore ... [They are calling it] A black billowing cloud" (WN, p113). Jack's replies to both are identical in expressing his belief that this name-change connotes control over any possible danger: "That's a little more accurate, which means they're coming to grips with the thing. Good" (WN, p113); "It means they're looking the thing more or less squarely in the eye. They're on top of the situation" (WN, p115). That being

'on top of the situation' relates to these linguistic operations of denotative power once again demonstrates the futility of acts of linguistic collusion. Any supposed power over the event must here exist solely on a level of free-floating discourse, unanchored in reality and unable to affect it. As Jameson writes in *Signatures of the Visible*: "To name something is to domesticate it, to refer to it repeatedly is to persuade a fearful and beleaguered middle-class public that all of that is part of a known and catalogued world and thus somehow in order" (Jameson 1992b, p39). The futility of this task is highlighted by the Gladneys' failed attempts to nullify the death-laden power of 'the airborne toxic event' by acting normally (domestically) in the face of the danger, as if this might shield them from anything out of the ordinary (WN, p118-119). All of these ruses are examples of what Baudrillard terms 'dissuasion': "Dissuasion is a rather particular form of action: it is *that which causes something not to happen*" (Baudrillard 1992d, p2). The mechanics of dissuasion in this instance amount to what Michael Valdez Moses explicates as the strategy, "manipulate the signs, deconstruct the symptoms, and the cause of referent in effect disappears" (Moses 1991, p76). This is also the operative tendency of the 'cure for fear of death' wonder-drug Dylar. As one character points out, Dylar does not and can not efface death: "'But we still die ... We just won't be afraid'" (WN, p228). As opposed to the fully realised image-identity of 'self-conscious peaches', 'the most photographed barn in America' and other simulacra, death is said to be "'the hard and heavy thing, the fact itself'" (WN, p203). Despite the power of technology to representationally reify the world in images and computer simulations, the existence of death simply will not be effaced. As Murray points out: "'Every advance in knowledge and technique is matched by a new kind of death, a new strain. Death adapts, like a viral agent'" (WN, p150). Death stubbornly refuses to conjoin with its linguistic and representational images, just as Jack fails to conjoin with his. Neither can be re-produced in the manners that Jack desires. The existence of representational distance (itself an anathema to the mechanics of simulacrum) leads to the failure of these acts of re-presentation.

Thus it is that, threatened by the chaotic dissociation of the postmodern world and unable to construct meaningful coherent explanations in order to orient himself within this world, Jack Gladney attaches his fear of the destructive chaos of the world to the 'uncontrollable, overpowering object' of death. As an 'autistic' defensive reaction to the threat to his self posed by the chaos of the world, he attempts to develop a form of self-sustaining identity, utilising the operations of the image and of language in attempts to separate his self from the chaotic real, in continued attempts to become an entirely self-directed being. In essence, this is a form of defensive 'autism' occurring in response to the threat posed by the schizophrenically chaotic postmodern world. But, as has been shown, these defensive ploys fail. Due to the schism between language and the world, the inescapable chaos of the postmodern world denies representation, asserting its ultimate precedence over the ordered fictions of language. Though the act of attempting to impose linguistic order upon the

chaotic presentations of the postmodern world is of central importance to this section, before addressing this concern directly it is worthwhile to briefly examine yet another way of conceptualising the individual's reaction to the schizophrenic chaos of the postmodern world. What Joseph Tabbi and Fredric Jameson have termed the "postmodern or technological sublime"⁵² is shown to provoke the same defensive task of the linguistic imposition of boundaries upon the threatening, unrepresentable chaos of the world. Whilst having certain similarities to Romantic conceptions of the sublime, formulations of the postmodern sublime are linked to the all-pervading presence of technology in the postmodern world.

* * * * *

The word 'sublime' came into English from the Latin *sublimis*, meaning 'raised up' to the threshold of a door or lintel. This was literally carried into its earliest uses in English, where it meant 'set' or 'raised aloft', as well as 'high up' and 'of things raised up', and described the sense of flight (as in a use by Dryden in 1697: "Two Poles turn round the globe, the first sublime in Heav'n, the last is whirl'd Below the Regions of the nether world") or described towering buildings (as in Billingsly's 1657 lines: "He'd rost her quick, and after throw her down / From the sublimest tower in town")⁵³. A fully formed discourse on the sublime appeared in the eighteenth-century, propelled by the publication of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* in 1757, and Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* in 1763, both of which elaborated the mixed emotions of a subject at its limits. These early conceptions of the sublime focus upon the distinction between the feelings of the sublime and the beautiful. According to Kant: "the sublime arouses awe and admiration, whereas the beautiful arouses joy" (Kant 1960 c1763, p18). Burke and Kant presented the individual's experience of the sublime in similar fashion, Kant using such terms as "dread" and "quiet wonder" (Kant 1960 c1763, p47), Burke writing of "astonishment ... that state of the soul, in which its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror" (Burke 1958 c1757, p57) and of the experience of being "impressed with a sense of awe, in a sort of tranquillity shadowed with horror" (Burke 1958 c1757, p34). This ambivalent reaction is expressive of Romantic ideas of the sublime "exceeding the bounds of our comprehension" (Burke 1958 c1757, p68) and causing feelings both of ecstatic pleasure and of terrifying pain. According to Burke, this is due to the fact that, on encountering the sublime "the mind is so filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it" (Burke 1958 c1757, p57). This sublime 'object' was not seen as 'completed' or 'distinct' (as was 'the beautiful'), but was witnessed as a form of 'infinity'.

⁵² See (Jameson 1991, p37) and (Tabbi 1995).

⁵³ Both quotations cited in Oxford English Dictionary, compact 1971 edition (p30).

For, according to Burke, "to see an object distinctly, and to perceive its bounds, is one and the same thing" (Burke 1958 c1757, p63).

Kant's notion of the mathematical sublime, outlined in the 'Analytic of the Sublime' section of his 1790 *Critique of Judgement*, presents a similar object of "vast magnitude" that the mind cannot comprehend. The mathematical sublime begins when a magnitude can be apprehended but not comprehended, as in the concept of infinity, which is apprehensible but ultimately unrepresentable. Kant's 'Analytic of the Sublime' articulated such varied manifestations of the sublime as the 'mathematical sublime' and the 'dynamically sublime'. Early formulations of the sublime were almost univocally centred upon the experience of something infinite in nature. The most commonly represented form of the sublime in the Romantic age was the mountain, in particular the Swiss Alp, a conceptual space significantly distant from the world of science and reason and, according to Simon Schama, a site that operated to express a sense of sublimity in the infinite expanses of nature that were fast disappearing in an age of documenting and explaining natural phenomena (Schama 1995, pp447-513). This Romantic notion of the sublime formed a powerful discursive concept that reflected broader cultural obsessions with elevation, purity, the remote, the inexplicable and the ephemeral. However, the Romantic sublime was never seen as being beyond reason, but rather appeared at the point at which reason confronted its limits. According to Kant, the sometimes threatening experience of the sublime in nature thus revealed a contradiction that lies at the heart of the human subject: "Our imagination strives to progress towards infinity, while our reason demands absolute totality" (Kant 1987 c1790, p106). Whilst Kant's explication of the dynamic sublime described an internal vibration in the subject "a rapidly alternating attraction and repulsion produced by one and the same object" (Kant 1987 c1790, p115), appearing when encountering nature as infinitely mighty but as a might with no ultimate dominance over man, what Joseph Tabbi describes as the experience of the postmodern sublime occurs when the individual encounters the all-pervading, inescapable, unrepresentable, and dominating object of technology.⁵⁴ According to Tabbi: "One could hardly find a better contemporary occasion for the sublime than the excessive production of technology itself. Its crisscrossing networks of computers, transportation systems, and communications media, successors to the omnipotent 'nature' of nineteenth-century romanticism, have come to represent a magnitude that at once attracts and repels the imagination" (Tabbi 1995, p16). This ambivalence experienced in the face of the technological sublime "[a] simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from technology" (Tabbi 1995, p1) occurs because of technology's status as both a potential mode of representation and an unrepresentable object in itself. As Tabbi points out, although "the unprecedented

⁵⁴ As Tabbi writes, "Kant's sublime object, a figure for an infinite greatness and infinite power in nature that cannot be represented, seems to have been replaced ... by a technological process" (Tabbi 1995, p1x).

potential for science and technology to assist forms of social, political, and economic control [has] made technology itself a powerful mode of representation", this form of representation becomes in itself an unrepresentable object that alienates the individual: "The image of the machine presents faceless and impersonal forces that seem to conflict with the human imagination ... that in their abstraction and precision can also call us outside ourselves" (Tabbi 1995, p1).

According to Thomas Weiskel's extensive study of Romantic notions of the sublime, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*, the individual's experience of total inundation in the sublime object was often described as threatening the self with a loss of identity or "anxiety of incorporation" (Weiskel 1976, p105). A similar effect of the postmodern sublime is particularly evident in the novels of Norman Mailer. The narrator of Mailer's account of the Apollo moon landing, *A Fire on the Moon*, suffers a 'loss of ego' (the title of the first chapter) after entering the massive Vehicle Assembly Building where the Apollo rockets are assembled. The building itself is an embodiment of a technological complexity that exceeds the comprehension of the human mind: "a complexity of buildings within buildings" that inspires both reverent awe and anxious terror (Mailer 1970, p53). What distinguishes such accounts of the postmodern sublime from the notion of the Romantic sublime is the insistence upon the situation of the self in the midst of a structure in which "nothing" human "fit[s] any longer" (Mailer 1991, p56). Mailer's vertigo above the Vehicle Assembly Building is "the vertiginous feeling", in Peter Brooks's phrase, "of standing over the abyss created when the necessary centre of things has been evacuated and dispersed" (Brooks 1976, p21). In Mailer's encyclopaedic spy-novel, *Harlot's Ghost*, yet another example of the postmodern technological sublime appears in the narrator's awe-struck and horrified account of the CIA's continual tape-recording of tapped phone-lines in communist Berlin:

At endless rows of work tables, recording machines were stopping and starting... The sound of 150 Ampex tape recorders ... moving in forward or reverse, electronic beeps signalling the conclusions or commencements of telephone conversations produced an aggregate of sound that stirred me in the same uneasy fashion as some of the more advanced electronic music I had listened to at Yale.

Was there one telephone dialogue between the East German police and/or the KGB and/or the Soviet military that was not being captured at this moment on one or another Ampex? Their humming and whirring, their acceleration and slowdown, were an abstract of the group mind of the enemy, and I thought Communist spirit must look and sound like this awful room, this windowless portent of Cold War history.
(Mailer 1991, p352)

Despite the fact that these tapes present a complete and bounded vision of 'the Communist spirit', they remain largely unstudied. As the narrator remarks, "'hundreds of translators laboured over the prodigious output ... The effort was analogous to extracting a gram of radium from a mountain of uranium'" (Mailer 1991, p498). This morass of raw information and data (which in itself is recounted as being only "'a small part of the

operation" (Mailer 1991, p352)) is only available to the individual as the aggregate sound of 'electronic beeps' that not only extend beyond the capacity of any one person (or, indeed, any group of people) to translate or bring to interpretative closure, but are almost entirely distanced from the human communication they ostensibly represent.

Whilst the notion of the postmodern sublime obviously differs substantially from Romantic conceptions of the sublime, some of *White Noise's* characters' reactions to what Jack describes as "[a]nother postmodern sunset, rich in romantic imagery" (WN, p227) are analogous to descriptions of the experience of the Romantic sublime. These sunsets simultaneously attract and repel viewers, who react to them in the ambivalently awe-struck fashion appropriate to the Romantic sublime:

It is hard to know how we should feel about this. Some people are scared by the sunsets, some determined to be elated, but most of us don't know how to feel, are ready to go either way ... What else do we feel? Certainly there is awe, it is all awe, it transcends previous categories of awe, but we don't know whether we are watching in wonder or dread, we don't know what we are watching or what it means

...
(WN, p324)

In contrast to Romantic conceptions of the feeling of the sublime being caused by an experience of the infinite in nature, the 'postmodern sunsets' of *White Noise* are thought to be man-made. At one point in the novel, Jack relates a theory that it is not the 'airborne toxic event' that is responsible for the sunsets, but man-made micro-organisms deployed by governmental authorities in order to destroy the cloud (WN, p227). The toxic cloud that is eventually responsible for the appearance of these 'postmodern sunsets' is said to be a result of the spillage of Nyodene Derivative. As one character explains: "'Nyodene D. is a whole bunch of things thrown together that are byproducts of the manufacture of insecticide'" (WN, p131). Thus the 'postmodern sunsets' occur as a result of artificial micro-organisms deployed to destroy the toxic cloud of 'the airborne toxic event'. They are the derivative of a derivative of a chemical 'derivative' of a man-made chemical (itself a derivative of natural elements). In a *mise-en-abyme* of simulation and simulacra, these 'postmodern sunsets' have effectively imploded the nature/culture distinction, creating a scene of 'postmodern nature' if you will. Technology, at this point, is not only seen as being a tool for the manipulation, ordering and understanding of the world, but also as being a necessary constituent of the almost infinitely complex postmodern landscape itself. Jack remarks that upon being confronted with the sublime power of the 'airborne toxic event':

We weren't sure how to react.... Our fear was accompanied by a sense of awe that bordered on the religious. It is surely possible to be awed by the thing that threatens your life, to see it as a cosmic force, so much larger than yourself, more powerful, created by elemental and wilful rhythms. This was a death made in the laboratory, defined and measurable, but we thought of it at the time in a simple and primitive way, as some seasonal perversity of the earth like a flood or tornado,

something not subject to control. Our helplessness did not seem compatible with the idea of a man-made event.
(WN, p127-128)

Just as Jack attaches his fear of the inescapable chaos of the postmodern world to the uncontrollable, overwhelming object of death, he also associates these manifestations of the postmodern sublime with death. Babette warns Jack against his attempts to elude death: "You can't sidestep the true story, Jack, it's too big" (WN, p197). 'Big' indeed, for Jack reacts to death as an inescapable object of the vast, terrifying power of the sublime.⁵⁵ Jack says of the 'airborne toxic event': "The enormous dark mass moved like some death ship" (WN, p127); "The cloud resembled a national promotion for death" (WN, p158). Jack's association of death with the toxic cloud intensifies because it is through contact with this cloud that Jack is contaminated by potentially life-threatening chemicals. As Jack muses on this event: "Death has entered" (WN, p141).

In *White Noise* this postmodern sublime is also associated with the technological phenomena of 'white noise', variously described as: "an artificially produced electronic noise invented to cover over the silence which disturbs workers in modern soundproof office buildings" (Moses 1991, p81); "a random mix of frequencies over a wide spectrum that renders signals unintelligible" (Maltby 1996, p5); and "media noise, the techno-static of a consumer culture that penetrates our homes and our minds" (Bonca 1996, p4). As a composite of colour and sound, qualities that have traditionally been conceived of as adhering to particular objects located in space and time respectively, white noise lacks an object of 'adherence', and hence is properly beyond representation in its literal form. 'Noise' is also a term that is important in communication theory, referring to the disorganised indeterminacies occurring when a message is communicated through a form that degrades its integrity as message, a form of randomly occurring positive informational chaos. As Norbert Wiener explains, "Organism is opposed to chaos, to disintegration, to

⁵⁵ Whereas Thomas Weiskel states that Romantic conceptions of the sublime were "an attempt to revise the meaning of transcendence" (Weiskel 1976, p4) the sublime object of death as it is figured in *White Noise* presents a new version of the utter transcendence of death against a background of deathless simulacrum. Thus is the unrepresentability of (even postmodern) death and its being "something not subject to control" (WN, p127-128). According to Weiskel, the aesthetic of the sublime is an "expression of an episteme in which order is arbitrary, a matter of hypothesis, or as Burke says, of custom" (Weiskel 1976, p16). Hence the association of the sublime with the breakdown of the direct relation of mind and object, and "the failure of clear thought and matters beyond determinate perception" (Weiskel 1976, p17) that in *White Noise* is expressive of the alienating failure of representation. This alienation is intimately connected to the postmodern ex-centring of meaning (related to Weiskel's statement concerning the sublime's expression of the arbitrary nature of 'custom': the norm which constitutes centre), and is present in experiences of both schizophrenia (as has been demonstrated earlier), and of the sublime. As Burke writes of the *ekstasis* of the Romantic sublime, "The mind is hurried out of itself, by a croud [sic] of great and confused images" (Burke 1958 c1757, p62). This may be considered in the postmodern era as parallel to the Baudrillardian 'ecstasy of communication', using the term ecstasy in its older sense of being outside of the stasis of the body, in a way that may draw further inferences between these theories of the postmodern sublime and our previous analysis of postmodern schizophrenia.

death, as message is to noise" (Wiener 1954, p95). Jack and Babette similarly come to associate white noise with death: "'What if death is nothing but sound?'/Electrical noise./'You hear it forever. Sound all around. How awful./'Uniform, white'" (WN, p198). Both death and the phenomenon of 'white noise' figure prominently in such a fashion as the representatives of the all-pervading, inefaceable, unrepresentable chaos of the postmodern world.

As should be clear, conceptions of the postmodern sublime have much in common with the concept of postmodern schizophrenia. Apart from this association of both the postmodern sublime and postmodern schizophrenia with the uncontrollable, overpowering, unrepresentable object of death, the ambivalent relation that typifies reactions to the sublime is evident in earlier analyses of the ways in which the characters of *White Noise* are drawn toward technological representations of the world, but are ultimately repelled and alienated by their inability to coherently comprehend these representations. Such conjunctions between reactions to the postmodern sublime and postmodern schizophrenia in *White Noise* are even more evident when one considers Weiskel's remarks that reactions in the face of the sublime exhibit features of 'superego anxiety', the mind turned toward "an ideal of totality and power" (Weiskel 1976, p83) in which meaning is overwhelmed by the sublime object that threatens a state of absolute metaphor (Weiskel 1976, p26). In this state the self is threatened with the possibility of the loss of its boundaries. Both postmodern schizophrenia and the postmodern sublime thus are seen as threatening the coherence of the self in similar ways, ostensibly due to the failure of representation in the face of an inescapable, unrepresentable object. Such a loss of self in the face of the postmodern sublime is evident toward the end of *White Noise*, where Jack confronts the man who had a brief affair with Jack's wife, Willie Mink. Willie Mink is the ultimate postmodern schizophrenic. He mistakes words for things (WN, p311); his speech is littered with the invasive language of the mass media ("To begin your project sweater", he said, "first ask yourself what type sleeve will meet your needs" (WN, p307)); and he is composed of the global units of the postmodern lack of origin, wearing "a Hawaiian shirt and Budweiser shorts" (WN, p305) living in one of the identical "nine or ten rooms" in "the Roadway motel" (WN, p304) (identical to all other 'Roadway motels' scattered across America) and racially indeterminate ("Was he Melanesian, Polynesian, Indonesian, Nepalese, Surinamese, Dutch-Chinese? Was he a composite?" (WN, p307)). As opposed to his previous fear of 'plotting' (essentially because he believes that "'All plots tend to move deathward'" (WN, p26) a belief which presupposes the danger to the self posed by the sublime), in confronting Willie Mink, Jack follows Murray's proposition that facing death is the only way of averting it. It is through the perverse logic of "'Kill to live'" (WN, p291) that Jack comes to consciously confront the postmodern sublime presented by death.

During this episode, Jack's heightened consciousness is characterised by a schizoid distance from the self and a dissociation of outside elements: "I was advancing in consciousness. I watched myself take each separate step. With each separate step, I became aware of processes, components, things relating to other things" (WN, p304). Rather than stating 'it was raining', Jack says: "Water fell to earth in drops. I saw things new... Water fell to earth in drops" (WN, p304-305). As Jack remarks:

I sensed I was part of a network of structures and channels. I knew the precise nature of events. I was moving closer to things in their actual state as I approached a violence, a smashing intensity.
(WN, p305)

This is an exultant experience of the postmodern sublime that occurs in the space of multiplicities of surface arising from the effacement of the 'depth' of the real, as is shown by the narrative's repetition of such phrases as "surfaces gleamed" (WN, p305) and "A heightened reality. A denseness that was also a transparency" (WN, p307).⁵⁶ White noise is an undeniable presence during the Willie Mink episode. At first, Jack says, "I heard a noise, faint, monotonous white" (WN, p306). As the action increases there is "White noise everywhere" (WN, p310). Willie tells Jack: "'You are very white, you know that?'" (WN, p310); and when Jack shoots Willie: "The sound snowballed in the white room" (WN, p312). That the presence of white noise is so insistent in this episode is telling. It is Jack's changing approach to death, from defensive retreat to confrontation of the postmodern sublime in which Jack undergoes a temporary loss of self, that marks this episode (WN, p310).⁵⁷

Paradoxically, while the sublime is that which denies closure, it is Jack's confrontation with the sublime that returns him to a bounded existence. As Winnie Richards asks him: "Isn't

⁵⁶ As Weiskel writes of the Romantic sublime, "As an image, it is the abyss" (Weiskel 1976, p25). This in conflict with the occurrences of the sublime presented by *White Noise*, where the representatives of death are denied denotative metaphors of depth. This is evident when Jack experiences a "shallow, heart-stopping plunge" (pseudo-scientifically written off as "the more or less normal muscular contraction known as the myoclonic jerk") even though he considers death to be a thing of depth: "Is this what it's like, abrupt, peremptory? Shouldn't death, I thought, be a swan dive, graceful, white-winged and smooth, leaving the surface undisturbed?" (WN, p18).

⁵⁷ What Wilcox reads as the deflation of the visionary moment and epiphany of identity into "a farcical loss of self" (Wilcox 1991, p350) in Jack's epiphanic statement that, "I believed everything. I was a Buddhist, a Jain, a Duck River Baptist" (WN, p310) can in fact, be read as a serious elaboration of postmodern notions of the falsity of essentialist notions of determinate identity. The fact that Jack relates himself first as Buddhist and Jain also alludes to the extinction of self aimed at by many Eastern philosophies as a road to oneness with the true nature of the universe, this achieved primarily through disintegrating the (false) distinction between subject and object. Connie Zweig has commented upon the conjunctions between the postmodern 'death of the subject' and the Buddhist view that "the Self was an illusion, a creation of Mind ... [that is] constructed out of our identification with experience in each moment, thus providing a sense of continuity in time and space" (Zweig 1996, p141-142). There are even more overt references to the Buddhist extinction of self at the finale of *Running Dog*, where Selvy travels to the desolated landscape of the desert in order to speak to his meditation teacher, Levi

death the boundary we need? Doesn't it give a precious texture to life, a sense of definition? You have to ask yourself whether anything you do in this life would have beauty and meaning without the knowledge you carry of a final line, a border or limit" (WN, p228-229). Jack's brush with death—being shot by Willie Mink whilst in a hallucinogenic state—awakens him to his immanent fear of it, rousing him from this schizophrenic state and reactively bounding his dissipating selfhood. For it is through fear in the face of the death that Jack's selfhood is secured: "If death can be seen as less strange and unreferenced, your sense of self in relation to death will diminish, and so will your fear" (WN, p229).

Though Jack's encounter with Willie Mink that results in this loss of self followed the perverse logic (initially proposed by Murray) of "Kill to live" (WN, p291) it is Murray's belief that "To plot is to live" (WN, p291) that ultimately provides the key to reading Jack's plight. Whilst all plots do move deathward as Jack fears, it is precisely this factor that gives them their power to give meaning to life—incomplete and insecure meaning, but meaning nevertheless. As Murray states:

'We start our lives in chaos, in babble. As we surge up into the world, we try to devise a shape, a plan. There is dignity in this. Your whole life is a plot, a scheme, a diagram. It is a failed scheme but that's not the point. To plot is to affirm life, to seek shape and control.... To plot, to take aim at something, to shape time and space.'
(WN, p292)

A similar view is proposed by Frank Kermode, who states that 'plot' is "an organisation that humanises time by giving it form" (Kermode 1967, p45). Kermode writes of the textual reliance upon eschatological meaning, arrived at by reference to the notion of an ever-present future end, as being the means upon which we project our existential anxieties upon history (Kermode 1967, p97). According to Kermode: "All such plotting presupposes and requires that an end will bestow upon the whole duration and meaning" (Kermode 1967, p46). This temporal integration that gives rise to what Kermode identifies as a *kairos* (moment of crisis) "poised between beginning and end", is opposed to the undifferentiated flux of *chronos*, the "unfilled" or "passing" time (Kermode 1967, p46) that without the organisation supplied by mental boundaries and limits deteriorates into schizophrenic timelessness and the threat to the self.⁵⁸

Blackwater, about how "Dying is an art in the East", just before going to meet an expected extinction of self (DeLillo 1992, p233).

⁵⁸ A further example of *loss* of self occurring due to immersion in the schizophrenic undefined time of *chronos* is notably present in DeLillo's *Americana*, the protagonist, David Bell, experiencing "the freeing of a single moment, the beginning of time.... And yet something was coming to an end ... something like the idea of what I was, the time I occupied like space, ... Time had been warped, and looked back to the week before and could not find myself" (DeLillo 1990 c1971, p197-198).

The construction of bounded 'plots' in response to the threat posed by the chaotic postmodern world is primarily a task of imposing linguistic boundaries upon the unbounded world, the coherent form of the 'plot' imposed against the incoherent chaotic formlessness of the postmodern world. Despite the fact that neither postmodern schizophrenia nor the postmodern sublime (both here functioning as representatives of the positive chaos of the postmodern world) can be adequately represented or conceptually synthesised, plotting is that which promises to rescue one from the threat of meaninglessness. Because the chaotic postmodern world ever remains an unattainable, unrepresentable object, the confusion that it creates leads to the desire for stable meaning, bounded forms and determinate structures. This stability is shown in postmodern literature as being provided by the fictional constructions of narrative form that are lived as effective realities.⁵⁹

The construction and maintenance of effective realities through the mental ordering and structuring of the chaotic presentations of the postmodern world partakes in what I will here refer to as world-creation.⁶⁰ As George W. Grace states: "reality for a particular individual or group ... is reality 'as that individual or group knows it' (that is, as they assume it to be)" (Grace 1987, p109). In discriminating between differing world-creations, according to Grace: "the imperfectness of our access to knowledge of the real world assumes central importance. Emphasis is placed upon the fact that we do not have direct access to the real world itself" (Grace 1987, p6). In addition to Grace's distinction between 'the real world' and the constructed effective realities of individuals and groups, one might invoke Kant's related distinction between phenomena and noumena. Both phenomena and noumena can be intended by the mind's eye, but where only phenomena is presented to the subject (noumena being the unreachable '*ding-an-sich*': thing-in-itself, that can only be understood as a negative limiting factor of the very possibility of phenomena), phenomena is the conceptually lived realm, but which does not yet efface or make irrelevant the existence or concept of noumena.⁶¹ Although these do not equate, it must be said that the

⁵⁹ As Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death*, states, "Man's freedom is a fabricated freedom, and he pays a price for it. He must at all times defend the utter fragility of his delicately constituted world, deny its artificiality" (Becker 1996, p34). *The Denial of Death* is a work that has been cited as one of DeLillo's major influences in writing *White Noise*. See (Bonca 1996, pp4, 10—endnote 9) where Cornel Bonca notes this fact and cites DeLillo's personal confirmation of Tom LeClair's supposition of Ernest Becker's influence.

⁶⁰ Whilst differing world-creations may be thought of as distinct *interpretations* of the world, as Nelson Goodman argues, the idea of the 'creation' of conceptual worlds is still pertinent: "Whatever else may be said of these modes of organisation, they are not 'found in the world' but *built into a world*. Ordering, as well as composition and decomposition and weighting of wholes and kinds, participates in worldmaking" (Goodman 1978, p14).

⁶¹ In *White Noise*, for example, Jack cannot get a handle on the noumena of death but only on his own Heideggerian 'dread', which is not related to death in-itself but to his own existential position in standing in relation to death-in-itself. Dread in the face of death, according to Heidegger, is the dread of one's innermost and irrelative potentiality of being that is not to be overcome. For what is dreaded is implicit in the position of being-in-the-world itself. Jack cannot know the object of death, but only his feelings

reinstatement of representation inherent in the act of world-creation does rely upon interpretation of the presentations of the world in which we are still existentially situated. As Jameson writes: "cognitive mapping in the broader sense comes to require the co-ordination of existential data (the empirical position of the subject) with unlined, abstract conceptions of the geographic totality" (Jameson 1991, p52). Frank Kermode similarly argues: "There is a necessary relation between the fictions by which we order our world and the increasing complexity of what we take to be the 'real' history of that world" (Kermode 1967, p67). World-creation thus forms an attempt to conceptually represent an unrepresentable technological reality, an example of what Jameson defines as "cognitive mapping": an attempt "to enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole" (Jameson 1991, p51). Jameson sees cognitive mapping as a strategy "which retains an impossible concept of totality whose representational failure seemed for the moment as useful and productive as its (inconceivable) success" (Jameson 1991, p409), the major problem of which he defines as being inherent in its drive toward an absolute status of 'totality', "complete with illusions of truth, a baggage of first principles, a scholastic appetite for 'system' in the conceptual sense, a commitment to representation, and any number of antiquated mindsets" (Jameson 1991, p334). According to Jameson, it is the gap "between phenomenological perception and a reality that transcends all individual thinking or experience" (Jameson 1991, p416) that resists cognitive mapping's goal of corresponding to the 'real'. Jameson identifies the conspiracy theory of the paranoid in particular as a paradigmatic example of cognitive mapping, as a degraded and necessarily futile attempt "to think the impossible totality of the contemporary world system" in terms of "'high-tech paranoia'" (Jameson 1991, p38).

While the utter commutability of signs said to be inherent in postmodern linguistic relations is shown in *White Noise* to lead to a situation where there is an almost utter commutability of accounts of reality, these do, however, show strong tendencies toward the paranoid and the conspiratorial. Searching for an explanation for the terror occasioned by the 'airborne toxic event', for example, crowds are said to collect around "sources of information and rumour":

True, false and other kinds of news radiated ... from these dense clusters ... Remarks existed in a state of permanent flotation. No one thing was either more or

of it. Similarly, one cannot comprehend the sublime, but only one's feelings of it. Thus Jack's flight from being-toward-death ends in a flight from his own being, and away from the (constructed) 'world' and yet the object of death itself is not entirely irrelevant. Just as the sublime is described as occurring when the mind is overwhelmed by its object, the sublime presents the unattainability (unrepresentability) of the sublime object. This conception of the sublime also accords with the visions of the schizophrenic, chaotic mess of reality refusing to be bounded by language as presented in earlier discussions of the works of Kafka and Beckett, particularly to their use of the metaphor of Nothingness, implying the utter unattainability of the object-totality of the chaotic world.

less plausible than any other thing. As people jolted out of reality, we were released from the need to distinguish.
(WN, p129)

During this episode, Jack considers the possibility of the coming of Armageddon (WN, p137) and Babette's readings from the tabloids, which include accounts of hypnosis induced regression to previous life states, near death experiences, psychic predictions, the telekinetic resurrection of Atlantis, a mass celebrity assassination by the KGB linked to the search for the fountain of life (this being the Holy Shroud of Turin), UFO invasion of America, the ghost of Elvis Presley, the appearance of Bigfoot, and more (WN, p142-146), fail to inspire scepticism or disbelief:

No one seemed amazed ... There was no interest shown in discussion. The story occupied some recess of passive belief. There it was, familiar and comforting in its own strange way, a set of statements no less real than our daily quota of observable household facts.
(WN, p144-145)

The tabloids' presentation of this eccentric mix of phenomena presents what Damian Thompson terms a 'cultic milieu' (Thompson 1996, p212), a constantly shifting, eclectic and ahistorical body of mixed conspiratorial theories concerning and connecting everything from 'Primitive Spiritual Wisdom' and Rosicrucian enlightenment to hyper-technology and UFO abductions. Such is the 'cultic milieu' that finds its paradigmatic expression in the 'New Age' movement, displaying the fluid pluralism and eclectically ahistorical character of the postmodern: "instead of a single corpus of doctrine, the movement provides an arena in which apparently unconnected ideas and fads rub up against each other" (Thompson 1996, p195). However, whereas Thompson defines this cultic milieu as comprising a set of doctrines and beliefs "that Western society ... considers invalid, cranky or even dangerous ... [a] corpus of beliefs that for one reason or another society rejects" (Thompson 1996, p211-212), in *White Noise* this milieu is witnessed by characters in the relativistic context of the commutability of signs and instability of knowledge, where a large variety of narrative claims to validity are considered to be on an equal plain. In *White Noise* this must be related as the commutability of the signs of a particular order, those of the technological media. It is through the operations of the technological media that the cultic milieu is absorbed into a common culture. As one University academic of the 'American environments' department (a department linguistically denoting interest not in 'American history' or 'American culture' per se, but in the conceptual artificiality of the American 'environment') remarks: "'For most people there are only two places in the world. Where they live and their TV set. If a thing happens on television, we have every right to find it fascinating, whatever it is'" (WN, p66). *White Noise's* implosion of the TV world and the lived world presents a situation where it may be said that, in a Baudrillardian sense, 'where you live *is* television'. In this postmodern scene, the truth or falsity of the content of the technological-media message is considered irrelevant so long as it is presented with the authority invoked by the medium.

For DeLillo, it is the popular consent generated by the technological media that sustains the cultic milieu as a paranoid base of knowledge for the task of world-creation. For the postmodern novel more generally, paranoia presents a particular form of the task of 'plotting' (this word containing an obvious significance due to its dual significance as the primary drive of traditional narrative and the covert plan of conspirators) fictive boundaries upon the unbounded world. The impossibility of the completion of the task of such world-creation lies in the fact that its task is always directed toward the creation of a falsely closed order of determinate meaning. As the narrator of Norman Mailer's *Harlot's Ghost* mentions: "In life, it seemed to me, plot was always incomplete" (Mailer 1991, p1399). Whilst the postmodern novel does demonstrate a certain form of 'paranoia' in its tendency to interrogate normative assumptions, it must be recognised that it does not succumb to the paranoid form itself. Rather it interrogates the validity of such forms of totalisation. It is the rejection of traditional epistemological enquiry (in particular the 'reflection theory' of knowledge and the 'correspondence theory' of truth) from which arises the postmodern vision of the universe as an unrepresentable chaos that denies the possibility of coherent representation. N. Katherine Hayles sees this epistemological crisis as constituting the core meaning of postmodernity:

Postmodernism can be understood as a continuing process of denaturing, that is, of realising that concepts once considered natural are in fact social constructions. The denatured concepts include language, time, context, and, increasingly as postmodernism progresses, the human.
(Hayles 1990, p27)

Hayles's theory of 'denaturing' also bears remarkable similarities to Lyotard's definition of postmodernity as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984 c1979, pxxiv). However, perhaps it is best to replace Lyotard's term 'incredulity' with the term 'scepticism', whose connotations of almost dogmatic cynicism are particularly relevant here. As Berel Lang writes:

We may inhabit the first period in history that has suspected everything *can* be suspected.... At the edge of postmodernism, then, no theory or word or even feeling is above suspicion, and whatever postmodernism does or says seems to take this fact, perhaps only that fact, as given.
(Lang 1990, p141-142)

It is this tendency toward 'suspicion' that supplies the postmodern era with its peculiar tendency toward paranoia and its totalising theories of conspiracy.⁶² However, this

⁶² Take, for example, the (sometimes) sophisticated epistemological suspicion and engagement with issues of interpretative power ironically presented by 'The Ten Commandments of Coverup' posted to alt.conspiracy newsgroup on the Internet under the heading 'Conspiracy Rules (A Standard for Inquiry)' and reprinted ad nauseam in the conspiracy theory magazine *New Dawn*:

1. Successful conspiracies are impossible.

'postmodern suspiciousness' importantly supplies postmodern texts with their own scepticism toward such phenomena as paranoia and conspiracy theories. Lang's motto of postmodernity is the phrase (akin to the postmodern pragmatism of American philosopher Richard Rorty) "*Always in the spirit of contingency*" (Lang 1990, p147). It is such a recognition of the ineffaceable contingency of human creations that drives the postmodern text to interrogate what DeLillo views suspiciously as "a particular type of nostalgia: the nostalgia for a master plan, the conspiracy which explains absolutely everything" (Nadotti 1993, p4). In DeLillo's *Libra*, for example, conspiracy is seen by the narrator, Lee Harvey Oswald (and not by the novel itself) as being that which brings conceptual coherence to the fragmented existence of daily life:

If we are on the outside, we assume a conspiracy is the perfect working of a scheme. Silent nameless men with unadorned hearts. A conspiracy is everything that ordinary life is not. It's the inside game, cold, sure, undistracted, forever closed off to us. We are the flawed ones, the innocents, trying to make some rough sense of the daily jostle. Conspirators have a logic and a daring beyond our reach. All conspiracies are the same taut story of men who find coherence in some criminal act.

(DeLillo 1988, p440)

The narrative basis of the conceptual coherence of conspiracy is given through the characterisation of conspiracy as a 'taut story'. Hence Oswald's reported "vocational interest" expressed on a Visa questionnaire, "*to be a short story writer on contemporary American life*" (DeLillo 1988, p134), is connected to his impulse to narratively impose order on an alienating and fragmented world that renders him powerless and confused. The glut of unordered, disconnected, and chaotically 'schizophrenic' information presented by both the postmodern text and the postmodern world precipitates the paranoid search (of both characters within the postmodern text and readers outside its confines) for significant and determinate meaning. However, it is also this factor that supplies the postmodern text with a fundamental ambiguity toward paranoia. For it is the characteristic of the chaos of the postmodern world and the postmodern text both to impel 'paranoid' interpretations and at the same time resist verification and closure to interpretation.

Umberto Eco's novel *Foucault's Pendulum* is a good example of the postmodern novel's particularly ambivalent attitude toward the paranoid form. In this novel, the narrator discovers a plethora of information concerning the Knights Templar, Masons, Rosicrucians, and other groups similarly surrounded by conspiratorial conjecture. The

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2. The government shall not be considered a subject.
 3. He who controls the proof, controls the truth.
 4. The purpose of an official investigation is to confirm a cover story.
 5. An effective cover story must include some element of integrity.
 6. Evidence supporting conspiracy shall be contentiously derided.
 7. Evidence opposing conspiracy shall be accepted on face value.
 8. Only 'official' institutions may certify 'facts'—all else is rumour.
 9. Marginalise, intimidate, and silence dissent.

resistance of this information to verification and synthesis leads the narrator into compulsive acts of interpretation, at the same time providing a concurrent textual resistance to these interpretations. This eventually leads the narrator to the conclusion that "the whole world is an enigma, a harmless enigma that is made terrible by our own mad attempt to interpret it as though it had an underlying truth" (Eco 1990 c1988, p95). Characters' quests for stable meaning thus take place in a chaotic, enigmatic world that is full of information but has no underlying 'truth'. These quests also occur within textual 'worlds' which are themselves chaotic and lacking in determinate meaning, leading to what C. Barry Chabot describes as a "distinctly postmodern disorientation" in both character and reader (Chabot 1995, p66).

As will be demonstrated in the remainder of this thesis, whilst the postmodern novel identifies all world-creations as 'fictional' entities, it also implies that some sort of structured order must be imposed on the chaotic postmodern world in order for the individual to be able to meaningfully respond to his or her surroundings. However, there is the implication that one must be able to view reality in an ordered fashion, and yet at the same time be aware of the uncertain value of that structure as an interpretative system. Though Jodi Dean states that "[p]aranoia responds to anxieties surrounding what can be assumed to be real or certain in today's high-tech televisual culture by reassuring us that out there somewhere, however hard to find, there is a stable, identifiable truth" (Dean 1998, p17-18) the postmodern novel offers no such force of reassurance. For the postmodern novel, much as all world-creations are 'paranoid' in certain ways, the dangers presented by paranoid world-creations arise from their lack of self-reflexivity, their failure to recognise the fictional, contingent nature of any view of the world. As Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* states: "the mind that has conceived a plan of living must never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived. That goes for societies as well as individuals" (Ellison 1952 c1947, p567).

Section 2

The Paranoia of Crowds

Mass movements can rise and spread without belief in a
God, but never without belief in a Devil.

Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer*

As world-creation is the conceptual act of plotting the totality of a world that is portrayed by many postmodern novels as being inherently plotless, it is less concerned with achieving objective truth than it is with creating what might be termed a stable illusion: an illusion that is taken for real by those who partake in its presentations.⁶³ The task of world-creation, the mental imposition of linguistic boundaries upon the formlessness of the postmodern world, thus constitutes the (continually ongoing⁶⁴) project of the reification of fictive forms into stable illusion, the concrete plotting of unstable metaphor into secure metonymy that is the way in which the characters of *White Noise* attempt to construct a viable world-view in order to assuage their fears of the radical indeterminacy of meaning and the existential horror of contingency. That the act of world-creation may, more often than not, necessitate a group project is exhibited in Jack's musing upon Murray's idea that "The family is the cradle of the world's misinformation" (WN, p81):

There must be something in family life that generates factual error. Overcloseness, the noise and heat of being. Perhaps something even deeper, like the need to survive ... The family process works toward sealing off the world ... The family is strongest where objective reality is most likely to be misinterpreted.
(WN, p81-82)

Despite its reliance upon misinformation, the family unit generates a sense of stability and security that Jack is heavily reliant upon. Through the consent of its members, the world-creation of the family is seen by Jack as having the potential to achieve the status of stable illusion. As Jack asks himself of the possibility of Armageddon: "Is this the point of Armageddon? No more ambiguity, no more doubt ... If enough people want it to happen, will it happen?" (WN, p137). Because the world of the postmodern novel is conceived of as chaotic, resisting individual attempts to view it as ordered and structured, as Beckett writes: "One must make a world of one's own in order to satisfy one's need to know, to understand, one's need for order" (cited in (McMillan 1988, p15)). Though this statement does apply to the desire for stable order and determinate knowledge of the characters of *White Noise*, it must be realised that their plotting of the postmodern world not only is

⁶³ In his 1994 essay *Radical Thought*, Baudrillard allows for a certain type of stability of constructed meaning that accords with what DeLillo himself has spoken of as being "a reliable illusion" (Baudrillard 1994c), (Nadotti 1993, p5).

⁶⁴ As George W. Grace writes, "it is human beings who have created the conceptual worlds of their languages, and human beings can also modify them. It should be made clear that languages (including conceptual worlds) are constantly being modified in use" (Grace 1987, p113).

necessarily insecure, but does not even constitute a world-creation that could be said to be 'of one's own'. For the tools of world-creation are not to be found in the personal/private realm of the individual imagination, but appear in the common operations of language.⁶⁵

With regard to the project of world-creation, the operations of language exhibit a common store of instrumentality whose meaning finds stability in conditional assent. Language plays a key role in the project of world-creation not only because its consensual nature asserts the preconditions for the consensual reality of the group, but also because it is used to defend the integrity of the self. Particularly relevant here is DeLillo's presentation of the plight of the hostage in *MAO II*. When this Swiss poet is first captured by terrorists he is "full of plans" (or *plots* one might say) of a predominantly linguistic nature (DeLillo 1992 c1991, p108). These are directed toward his desire to communicate with his captors:

... he would learn Arabic and impress his captors and greet them in their language and have basic conversations ... And there were authorities to impress as well ... he would impress the authorities with his recall of detail and his analysis of facets and aspects and they would quickly determine the location of the building and the identity of the group that held him.
(DeLillo 1992 c1991, p108)

Here the captive equates precision of language with the ability to almost magically pinpoint (or 'map') a specific place and, more importantly, identity. As the hostage's captivity continues and he is cut off from communication with others, he loses the ability to construct linguistic meaning. As a result of this, he first succumbs to a schizophrenic fragmented lost sense of time: "There was no sequence or *narrative* or one day that leads to another" (DeLillo 1992 c1991, p109—my emphasis). Then, once again due to the loss of a consensual base of language, he suffers a schizophrenic loss of self whose reinstatement is reliant upon the consensual nature of linguistic construction:

There was no one to remind him who he was. The days were not connected. The prisoner sensed the vanish of the simplest givens. He began to identify with the boy [his captor]. As all the voices fled he thought he might be somewhere in the boy.
(DeLillo 1992 c1991, p111)

Only writing could soak up his loneliness and pain. Written words could tell him who he was ... The only way to be in the world was to write himself there. His thoughts and words were dying. Let him write ten words and he would come into being once again.
(DeLillo 1992 c1991, p204)⁶⁶

⁶⁵ As Robert Lilienfield writes in *The Rise of Systems Theory*, "The ultimate significance of communication is that it serves to bind society together.... The organism is a pattern that maintains itself against chaos and disintegration; the message is a pattern that imposes itself upon the chaos of 'noise'" (Lilienfield 1978, p70).

⁶⁶ The instability of the linguistically constructed self is a common theme in DeLillo's writings. Examples range from his presentation in *Running Dog* of Selvy's status as a 'reader', referring to his ability to read people (DeLillo 1992, p28), to the statement in *Americana* that links David Bell's autograph (a linguistic sign referring to the self) with his belief that he "must be somebody" (DeLillo 1990 c1971, p13) with both undergoing a loss of self as they cut themselves off from the effects of the

In fashioning a conceptual frame of reference directed toward stable existence in the world, group world-creation occasions what might be termed a 'consensual hallucination'. Although this term refers, in William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer*, to cyberspace ("A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators.... A graphic representation of data" (Gibson 1993 c1984, p67)) the sense in which it refers to the group's conditional assent in viewing a particular presentation of the world is extremely useful. It may be even more usefully figured as 'consensual reality' here, considering the way in which this 'hallucination' forms the basis for the 'effective reality' of the group. The failure of world-creation to realise itself as absolute thus necessitates conditional assent in the fictional constructions that it proposes. As Murray remarks upon the crowds taking photos of 'the most photographed barn in America':

'We're not here to capture an image, we're here to maintain one. Every photo reinforces the aura ... Being here is a kind of spiritual surrender. We only see what the others see ... We've agreed to become part of a collective perception. This literally colours our vision.'
(WN, p12)

Inasmuch as this collective perception of a consensual reality relies on group assent, the 'aura' must be 'maintained' by the group. Similarly, the power of meteorology to provide a sense of security and stability for Howard Dunlop lies not only in its ability to conceptually order and structure the external world, but also in the fact that it is a communicable order sustained by a broad consensual base. Dunlop's relating of the occurrences of interpersonal connection that resulted from his interest in meteorology emphasises the consensual nature of many acts of world-creation: "'I began to come out of my shell, talk to people in the street. "Nice day" "Looks like rain" "Hot enough for you?" Everyone notices the weather"' (WN, p55). This consensual nature of the need for the order and stability sought in acts of world-creation is also foregrounded in Dunlop's description of the people who came to learn meteorology from him: "'I saw something in their eyes. A hunger, a compelling need"' (WN, p56). This is even more evident in Jack's speech to his 'Advanced Nazism' class that addresses the "continuing mass appeal of fascist tyranny" (WN, p25):

'Crowds came to form a shield against their own dying. To become a crowd is to keep out death. To break off from the crowd is to risk death as an individual, to face dying alone. Crowds came for this reason above all others. They were there to be a crowd.'
(WN, p73)

codes of language that provide selfhood. Of particular interest is the assertion of the priority of language over self in DeLillo's remark in *American Blood* that Lee Harvey Oswald, the protagonist of DeLillo's novel *Libra* "seems scripted out of doctored photos, tourist cards, change-of-address cards, mail-order forms, visa applications, altered signatures, pseudonyms. His life as we've come to know it is a construction of doubles" (Carmichael 1993, p2).

The status of the crowd is as a building towards the self-referential, self-sustaining world of stable illusion that forecloses death by cutting itself off from the 'real'. This process is also evident in the presentation of the family: "The family process works toward sealing off the world" (WN, p82). This 'sealing off the world' must not be understood as denying the existence of the world or as being some sort of act of transcendent existence beyond the world. It is more the act of the construction of an effective reality that attempts to fictively to objectify the sensible world. As Richard Rorty writes:

We need to make a distinction between the claim that the world is out there and the claim that truth is out there. To say that the world is out there, that it is not our creation, is to say, with common sense, that most things in space and time are the effects of causes which do not include human mental states. To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations.
(Rorty 1989, p4-5)

Rorty's distinction between truth and world is somewhat like Heidegger's idea of the gap (or schism) between 'World' and 'Earth'.⁶⁷ According to Heidegger, the *logos* of Dasein (not to be understood as the capacity for reason or language but, according to David

⁶⁷ The preoccupation with death, language, temporality and technology in Heidegger's writings provides a convergence with the similar concerns in *White Noise* that can not, and indeed has not been ignored. Michael Valdez Moses utilises Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology* in his analysis of the role of technology in *White Noise* (Moses 1991); Cornel Bonca remarks that "DeLillo's tightest philosophical connections are not with Baudrillard or Lyotard, but with Heidegger" (Bonca 1996, p10—endnote 5) citing the closeness of DeLillo's belief that "language is the deepest being" with Heidegger's "Language is the House of Being", their common preoccupation with death, and their similar metaphors of epiphanic 'unconcealment'. *White Noise's* presentation of the inevitability of death finds similar expression in Heidegger's analysis of the finitude of Dasein as it refers itself, not to 'death' as such, but as the state of 'Being-towards-one's-own-death' (Sein zum Tode): "As potentiality for Being, Dasein cannot surmount the possibility of death ... Death thus reveals itself as the *most proper, nonrelational, insurmountable possibility*" (cited in (Krell 1993 c1978, p23). As Jack muses, "If the self is death, how can it also be stronger than death?" (WN, p268). The novel also alludes to Heidegger's famous statement that 'the German language speaks being', in its textual play with the concept of the direct relation of German with the 'unconcealment' of being and of the being of death. As Jack says, "There's something about German names, the German language, German things. I don't know what it is exactly. It's just there" (WN, p63). Jack encounters dread when thinking of the "Actual Germans" to be attending the Hitler conference (WN, p33). He attempts to learn the language from Howard Dunlop, whom he describes as being "flesh coloured" (WN, p32) whom Murray characterises as "'a man who finds dead bodies erotic'" (WN, p238) whose switch from English to German is related by Jack as being like "making a passage between levels of being" (WN, p32), and who reads a German translation of *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, "'A best-seller in Germany'" (WN, p221). Jack muses upon the German language, "I sensed the *deathly* power of the language. I wanted to speak it well, use it as a charm, a protective device" (WN, p31—my emphasis), and does, in a sense, try to use German against the fear of death in the episode where he mistakes Vernon for the grim reaper and goes to face him with "the copy of *Mein Kampf* clutched to my stomach" (WN, p244). While in fearful exodus from 'the airborne toxic event', Jack tells Babette to eat a tub of German yoghurt (WN, p133). Jack relates the naming of Heinrich as relating to the power of its distinctive 'German-ness': "'I wanted to shield him, make him unafraid'" (WN, p63). Even German shepherds are related as having special access to the realms of the invisible, "able to sense changes in the flow of information" (WN, p154). These examples all lead up to the climax of the novel, which takes place in "Germantown" (WN, p301) with

Farrell Krell, "to be thought of as the power to gather and preserve things that are manifest in their Being" (Krell 1993 c1978, p19) sets up the contexts of meaning of Dasein's 'Being-in-the-world' as being in a primary relation to the realm of 'Utensils' and all that is 'Vorhanden' ('at hand'). This 'Worldliness' of the 'World' constitutes the background of Dasein as foregrounding the practical pursuit of goals, rather than a more self-conscious, theoretical attitude to the things of nature that is constitutive of the being of 'Earth'.

For DeLillo, then, the failure to realise world-creations as absolute necessitates conditional assent in the fictional constructions that they propose. In a chaotic world wherein almost all narrative forms can be considered by the characters that exist within these novels to have equal claims to validity, this can lead to consensual realities of a dangerously paranoid nature. This danger becomes particularly evident in *White Noise* in Jack's speech to his 'Advanced Nazism' class concerning "the *continuing* mass appeal of fascist tyranny" of the sort presented by Nazi Germany (WN, p25—my emphasis). For this reason, the crowd's project of constructing a self-sustaining world-creation of stable illusion (which attempts to foreclose the threatening chaos of the postmodern world) is critically interrogated by a number of DeLillo's novels. DeLillo's 1991 work *MAO II*, in particular, is primarily concerned with the relationship between the paranoid crowd and the individual who dissents against its view of the world. The major protagonist of the novel is the reclusive writer Bill Gray, who is involved in a personal struggle against the most dangerous aspects of the phenomenon of the crowd. In particular, he resists incorporation into the mass-consumer cultural crowd of images, refusing even to have his photo taken for the lion's share of his career,⁶⁸ motivated by the belief that, through the replication and dissemination of repetitive images, individual differences are obliterated.⁶⁹ This idea is symbolised in the novel by numerous references to Andy Warhol's series of identically replicated pictures of Mao Tse Tung (hence the novel's title, referring to one of the

Jack using a "German-made" (WN, p253) gun to shoot Willie Mink and finally encountering a German Nun who sprays him with German words that he fails to understand, yet finds "beautiful" (WN, p320).

⁶⁸ On this point, it is noteworthy that one of the photographs that DeLillo considered for inclusion in *MAO II* was the famous image of an enraged J.D. Salinger, who had been tracked down by inquisitive journalists eager to photograph the elusive novelist, that appeared in the New York Post in the summer of 1988 (Nadotti 1993, p5).

⁶⁹ DeLillo's notion that the replication of images threatens the subject with a loss of individuality holds noticeable similarities to Walter Benjamin's argument that the large-scale mechanical reproduction of works of art has made irrelevant the concept of artistic originality and authenticity (Benjamin 1992 c1973b). Motivated by "the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction", Benjamin writes, "Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object by way of its likeness, its reproduction" (Benjamin 1992 c1973b, p217). This "adjustment of reality to the masses" (Benjamin 1992 c1973b, p217) is aided especially by the mass reproduction of images of crowds, such as are interrogated by DeLillo in both *MAO II* and *White Noise* (particularly in *White Noise's* insistence upon Nazi Germany's reliance upon the spectacle of the crowd—see particularly (WN, p73)). As Benjamin states, "In big parades and rallies, in sports events, and in war, all of which nowadays are captured by camera and sound recording, the masses are brought face to face with themselves" (Benjamin 1992 c1973b, p243—footnote 21).

pictures that is part of the series). The book is also saturated with images of crowds, from the actual photographs of crowds that appear within the book, to a gamut of narratively presented crowds. DeLillo himself has said:

The photographic image is a kind of crowd in itself, a jumble of impressions very different in kind from a book in which the printed lines follow one another in a linear order. There's something in the image that seems to collide with the very idea of individual identity. There's something menacing and violent about a mass of people which makes us think of the end of individuality, whether they are gathered around a military leader or around a holy man.... the psychology of the crowd, the obliteration of distinctions, of how people lose themselves in the multitude, of the need to belong to the multitude.... The need is not only to abandon responsibility, but to abandon one's self, to escape the weight of being and to exist within a collective chorus.
(Nadotti 1993, p1-3)⁷⁰

The mechanisms of the crowd are, in such a fashion, shown to be intrinsically anti-individualistic. The group dismisses the notion of individual logic in order to form a group-mind. Through the group's conditional assent to a particular consensual reality, this group mind provides the individual with stability and security. However, this stability and security are primarily seen as originating from paranoid world-views. In *White Noise*, for example, the stability and security provided by consensual reality are shown to motivate the crowds of Nazis who followed the paranoid beliefs of Adolf Hitler (WN, p73). In *MAO II*, the major threat to Bill Gray comes from fundamentalist terrorists who aim to impose their paranoid vision of reality (involving a totalitarian distrust of individuality) upon the rest of the world.⁷¹

Undoubtedly one of the most prominent examinations of the phenomenon of the paranoid world-views of large groups appears in the work of Norman Cohn.⁷² According to Cohn, incidents of mass paranoia more often than not arise during times of social insecurity and

⁷⁰ In *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred*, Robert Robins and Jerrold Post elucidate a similar vision of the bad faith of the individual who desires to become part of the 'consensual reality' of the crowd: "Ostensibly seeking freedom, in the words of Erich Fromm, he achieves an 'escape from freedom.' Eric Hoffer quotes a young Nazi who, extolling his loyalty to Hitler, indicated he had joined the movement in order to be 'free of freedom'" (Robins 1997, p96).

⁷¹ For evidence linking the phenomena of mass paranoia with totalitarian world-views, see particularly (Robins 1997), (Curtis 1974), and (Hinshelwood 1998).

⁷² Whilst Cohn's most well known work, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, is ostensibly a study of the revolutionary millenarians that arose in Europe between the close of the eleventh-century and the first half of the sixteenth-century, at times his insights, do have a particular pertinence to situations that occur in the contemporary world. In his foreword to the book, Cohn states that, whilst each incident in history does have an undeniable uniqueness and an irreducible particularity, "in the history of social behaviour there certainly are some patterns which in their main outlines recur again and again, revealing as they do so similarities which become ever more recognisable" (Cohn 1970 c1957, pxiv). In particular, Cohn aimed to shed light on "the sociology and psychology of totalitarian movements in their revolutionary heyday", more specifically, to enable a greater understanding of the totalitarian paranoid movements of the mid-twentieth century, "Communism on the one hand and German National Socialism on the other" (Cohn 1970 c1957, pxv).

community crisis, paranoid fantasies coming to substitute for the sense of order lost through ruptures in the nature of the traditional community:

... when a situation arose which was not only menacing but went altogether out of the normal run of experience, when people were confronted with hazards which were all the more frightening because they were unfamiliar—at such times a collective flight into the world of paranoid phantasies could occur very easily. And if the threat was sufficiently overwhelming, the disorientation sufficiently widespread and acute, there could arise a mass paranoia of the most explosive kind.... In this form it became a coherent social myth which was capable of taking entire possession of those who believed in it. It explained their suffering, it promised them recompense, it held their anxieties at bay, it gave them an illusion of security—even while it drove them, held together by a common enthusiasm, on a quest which was both vain and often suicidal. So it came about that multitudes of people acted out with fierce energy a shared phantasy which, autistic, delusional and barely related to the world around them, yet brought them such immense emotional relief that they could live only through it and were perfectly willing to die for it.

(Cohn 1970 c1957, p73-74)

In DeLillo's epic 1997 novel *Underworld*, DeLillo and some of his characters identify the paranoid tendencies of the late-twentieth-century in a similar fashion as being caused by the chaotic world-scene occasioned by the fall of the Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War is here responsible for having propelled the world towards an increasing decentralisation of power, resulting in the dominance of new schemes and networks of global power of an incomprehensibly chaotic complexity:⁷³

'Now that power is in shatters or tatters and now that those Soviet borders don't even exist in the same way, I think we understand, we look back, we see ourselves more clearly, and them as well. Power meant something thirty, forty years ago. It was stable, it was focused, it was a tangible thing. It was greatness, danger, terror, all those things. And it held us together, the Soviets and us. Maybe it held the world together.... Many things that were anchored to the balance of power and the balance of terror seem to be undone, unstuck. Things have no limits now.'

(DeLillo 1997, p76)

This feeling of confusion, the sense of the lack of the proper connection and cohesion of things, is shown as threatening characters with loss both of understanding of the world and of self-identity. For DeLillo, as for these characters, this occasions a nostalgia for the paranoid certainties of the Cold War:⁷⁴

⁷³ On this topic, see particularly Keniche Ohmae's assertion that, "with the ending of the Cold War, the long familiar pattern of alliances and oppositions among industrialised nations has fractured beyond repair" (Ohmae 1995, p7). John Gray similarly identifies "the emergence of a global economy [as] a decisive moment in the development of a late modern species of disordered, anarchic capitalism" (Gray 1998, p71).

⁷⁴ Of course, the Cold War itself was a period of intense public paranoia, exhibiting a rising collective fear of demonic conspiracies launched against the American way of life. To evidence the intensity of paranoia during the height of the Cold War, one might turn to William H. Epstein's list of just some of the historical events associated with a sense of paranoia and conspiracy that were prominent in America in and around the early 1950s: "Alger Hiss was convicted of perjury; Senator Joseph McCarthy vaulted into national prominence and the anti-communist crusade dominated American domestic life; Klaus Fuchs and the Rosenbergs were arrested as Soviet atomic spies; Donald MacLean and Guy Burgess defected to the Soviet Union, and newspapers and intelligence agencies in Britain and America started to

'You're worried and scared. You see the cold war winding down. This makes it hard for you to breathe.... You need the leaders of the world to keep the cold war going. It's the one constant thing. It's honest, it's dependable. Because when the tension and rivalry comes to an end, that's when your worst nightmares begin. All the power and intimidation of the state will seep out of your personal bloodstream. You will no longer be the main—what do I want to say? ... Point of reference. Because other forces will come rushing in, demanding and challenging. The cold war is your friend. You need it to stay on top.'

(DeLillo 1997, p170)

Since the break-up of the Cold War, historical and critical theory has been involved in extremely abstracted means of theorising power as alienated from human hands, existing in the complexities of decentred networks, communicational nodes of message transference, and so on. According to Lyotard, because we now live in technological matrices "at nodal points of specific communication circuits ... always located at a post through which various kinds of messages pass" (Lyotard 1984 c1979, p15) we can only see the consequences of power, not its origins or its ends. Power is theoretically viewed as being decentred in that it no longer resides in any one person's hands, is decentred from

search for the 'Third Man' and other moles in the transatlantic Oxbridge espionage network; State, Defence, and other governmental officials drafted NSC-68, the influential, internal national-security document that 'was the first formal statement of American [post-war, strategic] policy' and 'expressed the fully formed Cold War world set of American leaders'; the Korean War began, the USA and then Communist China intervened, Truman dismissed MacArthur, and the stalemated 'police action' dragged on; the H-Bomb was developed and tested and the US government began distributing plans for bomb shelters and other civil-defence measures; the CIA began secretly funding the National Student Association and continued to bring ex-Nazis out of Europe on clandestine escape routes or 'ratlines'; Congress passed the Internal Security Act, which (among other things) 'provided for the confinement of suspected citizens [political dissidents listed on the FBI's massive Security Index] in detention camps in time of emergency or insurrection'; the FBI secretly supplied names of suspected security risks to House and Senate investigating committees and stepped up its program for monitoring the political affiliations of academic faculties, often in collusion with university and college administrations, who, supported by the AAUP's redefinition of 'academic freedom,' were systematically investigating and punishing the politics of their own professoriat; the best-selling book *Washington Confidential* declared, 'Where you find an intellectual, you will probably find a Red'; and Frank Ellis, formerly a master-sergeant in a World-War II combat intelligence unit, took a leave of absence from Yale, joined the CIA, and helped set up ratlines in Frankfurt and Munich" (Epstein 1990, pp78-79). To this list could also be added such events as the Pentagon's escalation of the 'arms race', alleged head of organised crime in America Frank Costello's testifying at HUAC hearings, Fidel Castro's march on Havana securing him as the leader of the revolutionary forces opposed to the hated Batista regime, and Robert Oppenheimer's publicly aired doubts about the hydrogen bomb leading to him being judged a security risk targeted by conservative adversaries, not to mention the rapid radiation of conservative propaganda and censorship fuelled by the spread of network television and a growing film industry. According to George E. Marcus, the paranoid tendencies of the Cold War have provided the postmodern world with a broad context of conditions that makes the paranoid style an eminently reasonable tendency of thought for social actors to embrace: "[T]he cold-war era itself was defined throughout by a massive style of paranoid social thought and action that reached into every dimension of mainstream culture, politics and policy. Furthermore, client states and most regions were shaped by the interventions, subversions and intimidations pursued in the interests of a global conspiratorial politics of the superpowers" (Marcus 1999b, p2). As Robert Levine writes, "A rhetoric of extremity, conspiratorial discourse more often than not manifests itself at the least flexible and most repressive moment of a culture's dominant ideology—the network of beliefs, values, and, especially, fears and prejudices that help social groups to construct and make sense of their social identity and reality" (Levine 1989, p12). On this topic, see also Appendix I.

the individual, so to speak, and exists abstractedly in relations between people, groups and institutions.⁷⁵ In such theories, power is neither essentially good nor ill, but exists as a necessary constituent of all of our relations, not simply the negative relations of repression, suppression, domination and subjugation.⁷⁶ Against all of this is the urge to identify and hence personify power, an impetus that exists alongside a view of power as inalterably negative. Broadly stated, this is the desire to re-centre power, to see where the Devil lurks, and is part of the paranoid's attempt to recapture an understanding of an essentially incomprehensible world.⁷⁷

In such a fashion, mass paranoia performs what might be termed a theodical function, theodicy being the theological investigation into the existence of evil under the reign of an infinitely good god, or more crudely, the attempt to answer the question: why do bad things happen to good people? Whereas the theodicy of Saint Augustine explains adverse occurrences via a negative definition of evil—evil as a lack of goodness rather than a positive force in its own right⁷⁸—the form of theodicy implicit in paranoia takes a more Manichean form, constituting a positive force in its own right, a combative power maliciously directed towards corrupting and destroying the forces of good.⁷⁹ As Steffen Hantke writes: "reinstating the logic of 'us versus them', [paranoia] generally tends to trace power to a distinct origin, an evil presence" (Hantke 1996, p3). Such a paranoid interpretation of the world appears in the personification of historical forces of McCarthy's infamous speech of June 1951:

How can we account for our present situation, unless we believe that men high in this government are concerting to deliver us to disaster? This must be the product of a great conspiracy, a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any such previous venture in the history of man. A conspiracy of infamy so black that,

⁷⁵ As Foucault writes, "Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault 1990 c1976, p94). On this point see particularly Barry Hindess's work, *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault* (Hindess 1996).

⁷⁶ As Foucault writes, "By power, I do not mean 'Power' as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. By power, I do not mean, either, a mode of subjugation which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire social body.... The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 1990 c1976, p92-93). See also (Hindess 1996).

⁷⁷ On this point see particularly (Marcus 1999a), (Stewart 1999), (Hofstadter 1965a), and (Robins 1997).

⁷⁸ Augustine characterises evil as a "falling away from the work of God" arising due to the imperfection of humanity (Augustine 1972 c1467—book XIV, ch. 11). As Augustine writes, "For evil is not a positive substance: the loss of good has been given the name of 'evil'" (Augustine 1972 c1467—book XI, ch.9). "There is no such entity in nature as 'evil'; 'evil' is merely a name for the privation of good" (Augustine 1972 c1467—book XI, ch.22).

⁷⁹ Augustine registers his disapproval of this theory, characterising it as "the silly talk, or rather the delirious raving, of the Manicheans" (Augustine 1972 c1467—book XI, ch. 22).

when it is finally exposed, its principals shall be forever discerning of the maledictions of all honest men.... What can be made of this unbroken series of decisions and acts contributing to the strategy of defeat? They cannot be attributed to incompetence.... The laws of probability would dictate that part of ... [the] decisions would serve this country's interests.
(Cited in (Graumann 1987, p152))⁸⁰

The operative assumption behind McCarthy's speech is that the chaotic scene of degradation and degeneration is caused by malevolent human agents, a 'Them'. According to Popper, this sort of thinking is motivated by "the view that whatever happens in society—including things which people as a rule dislike, such as war, unemployment, poverty, shortages—is the result of direct design by some powerful individuals or groups" (cited in (Graumann 1987, p161)). In the paranoid mind there is thus a Manichean struggle between good and evil, us and them, Self and Other, and it is the conspiratorial enemy who appears to be the prime mover behind the mysterious workings of the forces and events of the world.⁸¹

Just as the characters of *Underworld* express a nostalgia for the certainties of the Cold War era, a security evident to the reader as arising in part from a paranoid attitude towards communist Russia, Robert Fuller insists upon the particular social function that mass paranoia plays in uniting individuals into (what they see as⁸²) a meaningful, well-defined group. This is achieved through the fictive identification of a demonic, conspiratorial enemy:

A community in the process of losing control ... actually requires a certain amount of deviance so that it can rally a renewed defence of its boundaries. By naming someone to the deviant class, a community is able to accentuate the frightening consequences of nonconformity and dramatise how vulnerable a borderless society is to disruption by alien influences. When a community 'names' the deviant ... it reminds its members who they are not and whom they must never allow themselves to become.
(Fuller 1995, p52)

⁸⁰ For discussion of the peculiarly American characteristics of the tendency to demonise national enemies, see Appendix I.

⁸¹ According to G.K. Chesterton's famous aphorism, "When people stop believing in God, the danger is not that they will believe in nothing, but that they will believe in anything" Karl Popper has made a similar remark that, "The conspiracy theory of society ... comes from abandoning God and then asking: 'Who is in his place?'" (Popper 1969, p123). With regards to the particular brand of paranoia provided by mass movements, the answer to Popper's question is provided by Eric Hoffer's *The True Believer*: "Mass movements can rise and spread without belief in a God, but never without belief in a Devil" (Hoffer 1958 c1951, p100). As one of the characters in *The Exorcist* remarks to a Jesuit priest at the novel's end, "as far as God goes, I am a nonbeliever. Still am. But when it comes to a devil—well, that's something else. I could buy that. I do, in fact. I do.... [God] never talks. But the devil keeps advertising, Father. The devil does lots of commercials" (Anderson 1995, p317). The priest cannily responds to this fallacious mode of thought with the insightful rebuttal, "But if all the evil in the world makes you think that there might be a devil, then how do you account for all the *good* in the world?" (Anderson 1995, p317).

⁸² It should be made clear that in all of the cases given above, these paranoid mechanisms are explained and elucidated in order to demonstrate their fallaciousness and insufficiency.

Bell and Vogel similarly state that one of the primary mechanisms involved in acts of mass paranoia is "the achievement of group unity through the scapegoating of a particular member" (Bell 1970, p382). Robert D. Hinshelwood's article 'Paranoia, groups and enquiry' equally insists upon the human propensity for cultivating enemies in order to provide a sense of self-definition:

[P]ersonal identity and the sense of self can be supported ... in the cultivation of an enemy who we can attack in angry ways. It creates a specific identity through being separate from the enemy.
(Hinshelwood 1998, p105)

Perhaps the most well-argued version of this idea appears in W.W. Meisner's *The Paranoid Process*. The foundation of Meisner's argument is the notion that the paranoid is driven by a desire "to eliminate ambiguity, to establish a consistent and coherent view of reality, and to formulate a belief system which enunciates in some determinate fashion one's place in life and one's relation to the structure of the world around one" (Meisner 1978, p40-41). According to Meisner: "The paranoid system provides a sense of self-definition, establishes the patient in a meaningful relationship with the world of his experience, defines his place within that context, and provides a context of meaning within which he is able to determine his course of action and the pattern of his life" (Meisner 1978, p96). For Meisner, the 'success' of the paranoid system of groups is aided by the projective identification of fictive enemies.⁸³ The illusory 'enemies' of the paranoid group are conceived of by Meisner as a "paranoid pseudocommunity" ("an imaginary organisation, composed of real or imagined persons, whom the patient represents as unified for the purposes of carrying out some action upon him" (Meisner 1978, p39)) whose identification is of paramount importance for the paranoid group because "a known and organised danger [i.e. the paranoid pseudocommunity] is easier to tolerate and deal with than an unknown and diffuse source [i.e. ambiguous and chaotic world conditions]" (Meisner 1978, p40). In instances of mass paranoia it is thus primarily through the symbolic Other that the Self is granted a unitary definition of identity.⁸⁴ Sartre's analysis of Self-Other relations on many occasions recognises the Self's use of the Other in such a

⁸³ As Meisner argues, "the sustaining of the integrity and strength of the group requires in some part that it set itself over and against an enemy. This is specifically where the paranoid mechanisms come into play. In a sense the group needs an enemy in order to bolster its own inner resources and to maintain its own inner sense of value and purposiveness" (Meisner 1978, p804).

⁸⁴ Numerous historical examples support this supposition. In *The Messianic Legacy*, for example, Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln state, "During the Crusades ... or during its wars with Protestantism, the Catholic Church emphasised the tribal aspect of its doctrine, *defining itself primarily by means of its declared adversary*, by projecting the 'infidel' or the 'heretic' as scapegoat" (Baigent 1986, p160—my emphasis). Related to the religious emphasis of this analysis of the mechanism of defining the Self via the Other is the fact that, in the New Testament, a variety of devils bear witness to Jesus' identity as the Son of God. It is a possessing devil who says to Christ, "I know who thou art; the Holy one of God" (Mark 1: 24-25) (Luke 4: 34-35), the Gadarene devil Legion asks "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, Son of God most high?" (Matthew 8: 29) (Mark 5: 7) (Luke 8: 28) and the girl at Phillipi, whom Paul dispossessed of a spirit, said of him and Silas, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation" (Acts 16: 16-18).

fashion as a reflective object by which to examine the Self. In such cases, the Other need not actually be a real person, for the Other may take form as an internalised consciousness of Otherness which provides the basis for certain forms of self-reflection. In his analysis of shame, a relation through which one "realises an intimate relation of myself to myself", for example, Sartre states that, whilst one may feel shame reflectively (that is, one may be shamed when not in the actual presence of another person), shame is "not reflective" and is always "shame *before somebody*" (Sartre 1969 c1956, p197). Thus shame takes place through "the presence of another in my consciousness" (Sartre 1969 c1956, p197)—the Other within, so to speak. It is the prominence of such phenomena that allows Sartre to make such statements as: "the Other is the indispensable mediator between myself and myself", and: "I need the Other in order to realise fully all the structures of my being" (Sartre 1969 c1956, p198). According to Sartre, the intentionality of a variety of relationships with the Other is directed toward the Self:

What I aim at in the Other is nothing more than what I find in myself.... the condition of possibility for all experience is that the subject organise his impressions into a connected system. Thus we find in things 'only what we have put into them.' The Other therefore cannot without contradiction appear to us as organising our experience; there would be in this an over-determination of the phenomenon.
(Sartre 1969 c1956, p202)

Thus "the concept of the Other allows discoveries and predictions within the heart of my system of representations" (Sartre 1969 c1956, p204); but the Other need not be an actual subjective consciousness (i.e. another person). And although this internalised Other may not be considered to be 'Other' in the categorical sense, it is a particular conception of Other that is particularly relevant to the mechanisms of group paranoia. For the fact that the Other may function in the definition of self without having objective existence beyond the bounds of one's mind does imply a lack of veracity in these Self-Other relations. The scapegoat is an Other that is firmly objectified (abstracted from its subjective reality) in order to posit it in certain relationships with the Self. As Gisela Konopka writes: "the scapegoat of the group ... is not rejected for something he is himself, but something the group projects on him—group projection frequently being as unconscious as individual projection" (Konopka 1963, p57).⁸⁵ All of this manifests itself in a form of phenomenological violence. For, according to Sartre, the Self that constitutes the Other-as-object (by directing a non-reciprocal 'look' at the Other) maintains its power of freedom by denying the subjective Selfness of the Other, appropriating his/her freedom: "At this instant the Other becomes a being which I possess and which recognises my freedom" (Sartre 1969 c1956, p356).

⁸⁵ This is not a relation that Sartre consciously addresses in his analyses, but his comments are particularly useful here in that they address the conflicts and bad faith inherent in a variety of Self-Other relations. The relation of using a fictively defined Other in order to grant a definition of Self is a perfect instance of such phenomena, for it is nothing if not a conflicting relation that involves the bad faith of the paranoid.

Although Sartre maintains that such strategies "are on principle doomed to failure" (Sartre 1969 c1956, p356), the many acts of phenomenological oppression that he and others detail are unquestionable.⁸⁶ In *The Second Sex*, for example, Simone DeBeauvoir appropriates Sartre's argument concerning the place of 'the look' in Self-Other relations in arguing that women have come to constitute a permanently subjugated Other, objectified victims of the subjective male 'look' (DeBeauvoir 1988 c1949, p16). This sort of slave-consciousness involves a fall from freedom into objectification, as the look of the master transforms its object into a degraded consciousness. As Sartre says of the Self-Other relationship: "[The Other] appears to me and he appears to himself as *non-essential*. He is the *Slave*, I am the *Master*; for him, it is I who am essence" (Sartre 1969 c1956, p237). The idea that the Other is a necessary object for the definition of the Self, but is necessarily degraded in order to fulfil this role, is also proposed by Genevieve Lloyd's philosophical work *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy*. Lloyd's central thesis concerns the symbolic associations (stemming from the ancient Greeks, but continuing through into contemporary society) inherent in "the idea and ideals of Reason", namely the fact that "maleness remained associated with a clear determinant mode of thought, femaleness with the vague and indeterminate" (Lloyd 1984, p3). According to Lloyd, these associations arise from the dualistic conceptual schematum that is traceable to the philosophy of the Pythagoreans, a dichotomous mode of thought whose traces are still observable in the conceptual superiority of the positively defined 'male' side of the equation over its negatively defined 'female' opposite (Lloyd 1984, p3).⁸⁷ However, the positive categorisation of maleness in fact necessitates the existence of its dark opposite in order to cohere as a meaningful concept. According to DeBeauvoir, it is through the existence of the negatively defined female category that the male category can be defined as a positive conceptual entity: "no group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself.... The Other is posed as such by the One in defining himself as the One" (DeBeauvoir 1988 c1949, p17).⁸⁸

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⁸⁶ Sartre himself maintains that, despite their partaking in falsity and "fundamental bad faith desires" such relations "can be maintained for a long time" (Sartre 1969 c1956, p357).

⁸⁷ DeBeauvoir similarly notes the philosophical tendency to define women negatively: "The female is a female by virtue of a certain *lack* of qualities,' said Aristotle; 'we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness.' And St Thomas for his part pronounced woman to be an 'imperfect man', an 'incidental' being. This is symbolised in Genesis where Eve is depicted as made from what Bossuet called 'a supernumerary bone' of Adam" (DeBeauvoir 1988 c1949, p15-16).

⁸⁸ This argument has notable similarities to Hegel's famous explication of the master/slave relationship alluded to in the above discussion of Sartre and DeBeauvoir. According to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, though the master "is the consciousness that exists *for itself*", this consciousness is recognised as only being able to be *for itself* in so much as it is "mediated with itself through an other consciousness, i.e. through an other whose very nature implies that it is bound up with an independent being or with

From the above analysis, then, we can conclude that the compulsion to publicly identify and eradicate sacrificial scapegoats functions as an attempt to facilitate the restoration of order in the face of the ever-encroaching chaos of contemporary society.⁸⁹ The threat posed by the incomprehensible chaos of the postmodern world prompts the mass-paranoid task of creating a stable social identity and correspondingly constrictive consensual reality, through the identification and persecution of fictive enemies. Such persecution of innocent scapegoats is part of the creation of a dangerously paranoid consensual reality that, according to DeLillo's *MAO II*, denies the chaos of the world in favour of its own fictive convictions:

When you inflict punishment on someone who is not guilty, when you fill rooms with innocent victims, you begin to empty the world of meaning and erect a separate mental state, the mind consuming what's outside itself, replacing real things with plots and fictions.
(DeLillo 1992 c1991, p146)

With regard to this dynamic, questions should arise about who, exactly, is chosen to play the role of the conspiratorial 'Other'. Will any Other serve the same structural role? Tom Douglas maintains that "[I]t is the primary fact of difference itself—visible, clearly distinguishable difference which forms the focus for the activities of scapegoaters and not, in the first instance, the nature of that difference" (Douglas 1995, p147).⁹⁰ Given that the primary function of the Other as he/she figures in the paranoid system is to enable the creation of a specific identity through being separate from the enemy, difference is obviously a factor of prime importance in the fictive identification of enemies. One might, however, take issue here with Douglas, for certain forms of difference in and of themselves can constitute quite unremarkable phenomena. It might also be noted that certain vital categories of discrimination do not in themselves manifest any explicit signs of 'visible, clearly distinguishable difference.' On the surface at least, communists may be virtually indistinguishable from their democratic capitalist adversaries, which is why certain non-visible differences may also be posited.⁹¹ Rather than the primary factor of difference

thinghood in general", that is, the slave (Hegel 1971 c1807, p234-235). As Elie Kedourie comments, "in his very mastery, the master finds that he is dependent ... [on] his slave" (Kedourie 1995, p112).

⁸⁹ As Robert Fuller writes, "By projecting ... doubts and uncertainties onto a demonic 'Other', the act of naming the Antichrist protects their personal and collective sensibilities from the frailties of human existence" (Fuller 1995, p13).

⁹⁰ As Tom Douglas writes of the criterion used by the paranoid crowd in their search for an adequate scapegoat, "the search for someone or something to blame usually finds what it seeks in available people who may be already disliked but who are inevitably seen as different. In essence what is created is a survival myth which more or less successfully attributes the problems and failures of an entire people not to any reality of its own social behaviour, structure or organisation but to those elements within itself which are or can be regarded as alien or deficient.... in its fully developed state it can often be seen as a kind of deflection, a distraction from the reality and from any consideration of the actual causes of distress" (Douglas 1995, p39).

⁹¹ The notion that certain forms of difference constitute a threatening Otherness, and an ultimately oppositional position, is a line of thinking that finds explicitly political elucidation in Robert Coover's

itself, it is the implication of Otherness that are connoted by certain forms of difference that come to the fore in cases of scapegoating.⁹² The desire to identify the demonic hand of the enemy has traditionally involved the persecution of a variety of peoples defined as Other. As Jodi Dean writes, this definition of Other "has been part of the history of America's understanding of its own identity, part of establishing the meaning of 'American', the contents and boundaries of the nation" (Dean 1998, p143).⁹³ An example of such a definition of national identity through acts of exclusion occurs in William S. Burroughs' first novel, *Junky*, when one of protagonist William Lee's paranoid acquaintances (who, rather ironically, thinks that Lee is a federal narcotics agent) asks him whether he knows "how narcotics ties right in with Communism?" (Burroughs 1977 c1953, p70):

'You know the answer to that one a lot better than I do. I see you are trying to find out how much I know. All right. The same people are both in narcotics and Communism. Right now they control most of America. I'm a seaman. I've been shipping out for twenty years. Who gets the jobs over there in the NMU Hall? American white men like you and me? No. Dagos and Spiks and Niggers. Why? Because the union controls shipping, and Communists control the union.' (Burroughs 1977 c1953, p71)

In this passage, the man's paranoid fantasies are shown to weld together a number of disparate and ill-defined 'un-American' activities, rationalising them as belonging to the one, monolithic, oppositional demonic force involved in a vast conspiracy against 'Americans'. The term 'American' is here negatively defined via a reactionary paranoid logic: an American is not a 'Dago', 'Spik', 'Nigger' or communist, and is not involved in either narcotics or unions. Despite Burroughs' somewhat deadpan presentation of this incident, that this sort of attitude is criticised by the novel is made evident by the protagonist's response (or, rather, lack of response) to the character's allegations: "I'll be around if you need me", he said when I got up to leave" (Burroughs 1977 c1953, p71). Rather than attempting to argue or reason with this man (a response which one suspects would fail to elicit any other response than further paranoia) Burroughs' protagonist simply leaves in disgust, for he sees no recourse but to leave this character to his paranoid fantasies.

The sort of simplistic theodical explanation appearing in the above passage is critiqued by Norman Mailer's first novel, *The Naked and the Dead*, in which a group of soldiers

quotation of Reverend Billy Graham in *The Public Burning*: "'Communism is a fanatical religion,' he declares, 'a great sinister anti-Christian movement masterminded by Satan, that has declared war upon the Christian God! Only as millions of Americans turn to Jesus Christ can the nation be spared the onslaught of a demon-possessed Communism!'" (Coover 1978 c1976, p21).

⁹² In *The Authoritarian Personality*, for example, it is said that, "Immoral tendencies are easier perceived in, or ascribed to, groups which seem not fully assimilated or altogether foreign. Hostility and the fear of being victimised can be expressed against these groups without restraint or expectation of retaliation" (Adorno 1950, p485).

fighting on a Japanese-held Pacific island blame the chaotic confusion of the situation and the general poor quality of their lives on the conspiratorial machinations of fictive Others. At one point in the novel, a famous labour leader is said by one character to be run by a "nigger woman": "'That woman is runnin' the whole labour movement, the whole country including the President is being influenced every time she wiggles her slit'" (Mailer 1949, p64). This statement not only reveals the character's fear of female sexuality and its power to influence men, but also provides an explanatory enemy who is Other in two respects, being both female and black. At numerous points throughout *The Naked and the Dead*, symbolic Others are blamed not only for the perceived deficiencies of the American state, but also for characters' own personal failures. A particular character, named Gallagher, is portrayed constantly advising his comrades to watch out for "fuggin' communists" who are always "working against you" (Mailer 1949, p224). Gallagher uses this conspiratorial mentality to explain his own sense of private deficiency: "no wonder he had never got anywhere" (Mailer 1949, p224). Throughout the novel, Gallagher comes to lay the blame for his problems upon convenient scapegoats. Rather than acknowledging the death of his wife during childbirth to be an unfortunate accident, he blames a non-existent Jewish doctor. As opposed to Father Leary's consolations and explanation that "'there're a lot of things which are difficult to understand'" (Mailer 1949, p226), it is the simplistic rationale that the death of his child was maliciously intentional that 'relieves' him:

He had a moment of panic, ... I bet a fuggin Yid was the doctor, he said to himself, and then forgot the thought. It left him with a pleasant glow of righteousness, however.... 'I bet a fuggin Yid was the doctor,' he said aloud.... 'The Yid killed her.' It relieved the tension he was feeling.
(Mailer 1949, p227)

The paranoid quality of Gallagher's personality becomes so markedly evident in the novel that, even when he is simply stood up by a girl, his levels of paranoia rise and once again he starts seeing the "'cards stacked against me'" (Mailer 1949, p232). He characteristically rationalises this situation by recourse to one of his favourite scapegoat categories, defusing this situation of its disturbing implication of the girl's rejection of him: "I bet she ran off with some Jewboy who's got the dough" (Mailer 1949, p232). At one point he even spits on a synagogue, "for good luck" (Mailer 1949, p229). When he later slips in a puddle, which wets his pant leg, he tellingly responds to a totally inert and irrelevant object with an absurd expression of paranoid suspicion: "Fug you, he roars at the pavement. Plot, always fuggin a guy, well you ain't gonna get me" (Mailer 1949, p239). In a series of flashbacks detailing Gallagher's life before the war, the development of his paranoid history is detailed at length. At one juncture he joins the group Christians United. The group is described as being united in its intention to "break the goddamn conspiracy" of "International Jews" and other such traditional scapegoats (Mailer 1949, p234). Whilst the poorer stock who adhere to the ideology of Christians United are motivated by the need for an uncomplicated

⁹³ For discussion of the peculiarly American characteristics of the tendency to demonise national

explanation and repudiation of their sense of powerlessness in the face of unsettling social crises, the leaders of the group cynically utilise the power of paranoid rhetoric over their members' uncritical credulity, gaining both political power and financial gain through their manipulation of the group:⁹⁴

There's the foreign element we got to get rid of, that are conspiring to take over the country.... We gotta stick together, or we'll be havin' our women raped, and the Red Hammer of Red Jew Fascist Russia WILL BE SMASHING YOUR DOOR DOWN.... Who takes away your jobs, who tries to sneak up on your wives and your daughters and even your mothers 'cause they wouldn't stop at nothing, who's out to get YOU and YOU 'cause you ain't a Red and a Jew, and you don' wanna bow down before a filthy goddam no-good Communist who don't respect the Lord's name, and would stop at nothing.
(Mailer 1949, p238)

This speech takes all qualities of Otherness to be conjoined and involved in a personal battle rather than an ideological war. This is despite the fact that some of the named Others, such as communism and fascism, are in fact conceptually contradictory; as one character snidely remarks in Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano*: "It's much more convenient to think of the opposition as a nice, homogenous, dead-wrong mass" (Vonnegut 1973 c1952, p82). The speaker is addressing a crowd, and his speech addresses social and communal issues; but it is rhetorically directed towards the individual 'YOU', uniting the members of the crowd into a homogenous mass-consciousness involved in the fight against an enemy that they see as being against God, and therefore satanic. Given the novel's recognition of the acts of projective displacement inherent in characters' scapegoating tendencies, the catch-cry of squadron-leader Croft: "I HATE EVERYTHING WHICH IS NOT IN MYSELF" (Mailer 1949, p141) contains a certain irony. A more valid explanation for the ubiquitous phenomena of scapegoating amongst the group comes from Roth, the persecuted Jewish member of the group, who remarks of his fellow squad members: "A Jew was a punching bag because they could not do without one" (Mailer 1949, p559). Because of the ^{inexplicable} ~~unexplainable~~ chaos and confusion of the group's situation, certain members of the group turn to convenient scapegoats for definition of their place in the world. They view these fictively objectified fantasy-figures as responsible for the evils of their situation, thus providing not only a theodical explanation for their troubling predicaments, but also a focal point for their anger over their perceived powerlessness to alter this situation.

The defining feature of such acts of scapegoating is the identification, denouncement and destruction of 'folk devils'. As Eric Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda explain:

enemies, see Appendix I.

⁹⁴ At one point, one of the group's leaders orders Gallagher to lay ketchup on the sidewalk outside a polling booth, then cries at those who are gathered to vote, "TAKE A LOOK, SEE WHAT HAPPENS. THIS IS BLOOD, THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS TO DECENT AMERICANS WHEN THEY TRY TO VOTE AGAINST A RED, THEY GET BEAT UP BY THE FOREIGNERS THAT ARE BEHIND M'GILLIS. THIS IS M'GILLIS'S WORK, BLOOD, HUMAN BLOOD" (Mailer 1949, p237). Despite Gallagher's knowledge of this duplicity, his paranoid attitude remains unchanged.

A folk devil is the personification of evil. Folk devils permit instant recognition; they are 'unambiguously unfavourable symbols', that is, stripped of all favourable characteristics and imparted with exclusively negative ones. In such a symbolisation process, 'images are made much sharper than reality.' (Goode 1994, p28).⁹⁵

Folk-devils play a necessary role in the theodical function of scapegoating, for, according to paranoid rhetoric, "evil does not arise by happenstance out of thin air; there must be a circle of evil individuals who are engaged in undermining society as we know it" (Goode 1994, p28). Folk-devils are the socially constructed fantasy-figures that are recurrently turned to as convenient scapegoats in times of crisis. Surprisingly enough, despite the fact that the characters of *The Naked and the Dead* are involved in an actual war with the Japanese, the Japanese themselves are rarely, if ever, the targets of the characters' paranoid rhetoric. Rather, the scope of paranoid hatred is delimited to more traditionally defined Others such as Jews, African-Americans, communists, atheists, and women. But by the time of Mailer's 1967 novel *Why Are We in Vietnam?* the rhetoric of the 'Yellow Peril' had become ingrained in American discourse to the extent that "the Yellow races" are present in protagonist DJ's list of his father's "large common thoughts such as these" (Mailer 1967c, p76):

(1) The woman [sic] are free. They fuck too many to believe one man can do the job. (2) The Niggers are free, and the dues they got to be paid is no Texas virgin's delight. (3) The Niggers and the women are fucking each other. (4) The Yellow races are breaking loose. (5) Africa is breaking loose. (6) The adolescents are breaking loose including his own son. (7) The European nations hate America's guts.... Communism is going to defeat capitalism, unless properly destroyed.... (11) The white men are no longer champions in boxing. (12) The great white athlete is being superseded by the great black athlete. (13) The Jews run the Eastern wing of the Democratic party. (14) Karate, a Jap sport, is now prerequisite to good street fighting. (Mailer 1967c, p76-77)

While Rusty (DJ's father) "reads the world's doom in his own fuckup" (Mailer 1967c, p77), indicating that he megalomaniacally views himself as a figure whose personal well-being is of central symbolic importance to the state of the American nation, it is clear that his projection is also related to his need to see culpability for the chaotic crises of American society as bound to a variety of folk-devil scapegoats.

⁹⁵ The peculiar way in which 'images are made much sharper than reality' is elucidated by Umberto Eco's essay 'The City of Robots'. In the course of a discussion about theme parks, Eco explains how clichéd preconceptions about the nature of things can often assert themselves beyond the limits of actual reality: "In this sense Disneyland not only produces illusion, but – in confessing it – stimulates the desire for it: A real crocodile can be found in the zoo, and as a rule it is dozing or hiding, but Disneyland tells us that faked nature corresponds much more to our daydream demands. When, in the space of twenty-four hours, you go (as I did deliberately) from the fake New Orleans of Disneyland to the real one, and from the wild river of Adventureland to a trip on the Mississippi, where the captain of the paddle-wheel steamer says it is possible to see alligators on the banks of the river, and then you don't see any, you risk feeling

It should be clear, then, that while paranoid perspectives are attributed to many characters within postmodern fiction, this is often for the purposes of criticism and critique of such views. Paranoia is shown to be the result of an urge for explanation of the chaotic postmodern world. The form that this explanation takes constitutes a threat to the individual, for not only does it show marked tendencies toward totalitarian anti-individuality, but it also involves the persecution of a variety of falsely perceived Others. These Others are enlisted as diabolic enemies to be persecuted in the construction of paranoid consensual realities, and are shown to be a vital constituent of the project of the creation of a stable sense of social identity via a theodical explanation of the perceived evils of contemporary society.

Many of the issues raised in the following discussion will be explored in greater depth in the next section (where the work of one author in particular, Thomas Pynchon, will be analysed at length). Here I will present a brief survey of some of postmodern literature's approaches to the issue of paranoia in order to demonstrate the tendencies that it displays in portraying paranoid characters. Many of the important details of postmodern literature's presentation of paranoia have been elucidated in the above discussion, but there is one particularly important element to discuss here: the postmodern novel's presentation of paranoia as the obsessive desire for determinate explanation of the place of the individual in the chaotic postmodern world and its criticism of the fact that paranoid world-creations fail to realise their own contingent, fictive nature. As I will demonstrate, various postmodern novels demonstrate that uncritical belief in the absolute status of paranoid world-creations is implicated in a variety of destructive and harmful social practices.

Whilst many of the representations of the paranoid practice of scapegoating provided by postmodern literature function to critique the bigoted rhetoric of obsessive suspicion, many are also involved in examinations of the underlying drive for explanation that produces mass paranoia. In Umberto Eco's novel *Foucault's Pendulum*, for example, the protagonist is tortuously led through a bizarre series of events in order to come to the simple conclusion that "[w]e always have to blame our failures on somebody else, and dictatorships always need an enemy to bind their followers together" (Eco 1990 c1988, p317). This statement in itself may not seem to be exceptional, but his dawning realisation of the chaotic nature of the universe eventually leads him to believe that "for every complex problem there's a simple solution, and it's wrong" (Eco 1990 c1988, p317). This

homesick for Disneyland, where the wild animals don't have to be coaxed. Disneyland tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can" (Eco 1993, p203).

is a realisation that, in turn, leads him to recognise the almost religious function of paranoid structures of meaning in repelling mankind's fear of chaos:

Mankind can't endure the thought that the world was born by chance, by mistake, just because four brainless atoms bumped into one another on a slippery highway. So a cosmic plot has to be found—God, angels, devils.
(Eco 1990 c1988, p318-319)

The protagonist of *Foucault's Pendulum* thus comes to the realisation that the impetus to view the chaos of the world as being covertly directed by some form of subterranean or sublime conspiratorial order functions as a defensive mechanism, as a means of coping with the confusing chaos presented by the world.

In *Foucault's Pendulum* Umberto Eco expresses a sympathetic fascination for the conspiratorial systems of order constructed by paranoid individuals in order to projectively structure the chaos of the world. The novels of Kurt Vonnegut are much more critical of this process. All of Vonnegut's novels emphasise the importance of realising the impact of the unpredictable (and often unexplainable) effects of chance and coincidence upon the world. In *Deadeye Dick*, the random firing of a rifle by a small child leads to the unforeseeable death of a pregnant woman, arbitrarily yet irrevocably changing the direction of the child's life (Vonnegut 1992 c1982); in *Breakfast of Champions*, a character's chance discovery of a science-fiction novel leads to a further series of coincidental occurrences that climax in his participation in a violent rampage (Vonnegut 1990 c1973); and in *Cat's Cradle* an unremarkable leader of a small island is accidentally responsible for the destruction of every living being upon the earth (Vonnegut 1980 c1963). In all of Vonnegut's novels, the idea that the universe is rationally ordered in a humanly comprehensible way, whether this be by the furtive machination of conspiratorial forces, the pressure of historical processes, or even by the scientifically defined forces of cause and effect, is put into question. In *Breakfast of Champions*, the dubious connections between effects and their supposed causes as conceived of by Vonnegut's characters (and even his narrator) are shown to play a significant part in the justification of all sorts of racial and social inequality, as well as such historical atrocities as the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, the execution of the Rosenbergs, the assassination of John F. Kennedy and even the Cold War.⁹⁶

Vonnegut for one is strong in his belief that, to quote *Breakfast of Champions*, the aim of humanity should not be to "bring order to chaos, but to adapt to chaos" (Vonnegut 1990 c1973, p173). Other writers are sometimes noticeably less than completely comfortable with this position. Hunter S. Thompson, for example, articulates the problem surrounding the assassination of John F. Kennedy as pre-eminently referring to the event's eternal lack

⁹⁶ See particularly (Vonnegut 1990 c1973, pp116, 80, 133, 116, 21-22).

of closure; to the failure of any one person to provide a satisfactorily convincing explanation of the 'real' circumstances behind the death of Kennedy:

John F. Kennedy [was] murdered in Dallas by some hapless geek named Oswald who worked for either Castro, the mob, Jimmy Hoffa, the CIA, his dominatrix landlady or the odious, degenerate FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover. The list is long and crazy—maybe Marilyn Monroe's first husband fired those shots from the Grassy Knoll. Who knows? A whole generation of American journalists is still embarrassed by their failure to answer that question.
(Thompson 1995 c1994, p3)

Thompson's lack of knowledge eventually leads him (in a characteristically drug-addled state) to go "to the desperate length of confessing to the murder myself", as he attempts to explain the death of Kennedy, attempting to impose a delimited significance and determinate meaning upon an event that stubbornly denies explanation (Thompson 1995 c1994, p4). However, he cannot imagine an adequate reason for his perpetration of this act, and is forced to discursively hedge around the issue with what is ultimately an unsatisfactory vagueness: "I spoke about ballistics and treachery and my 'secret work for the government' in Brazil, when he thought I was in the Peace Corps in the sixties" (Thompson 1995 c1994, p4). Put simply, Thompson attempts to repel the chaotic possibility of the event's eternal lack of explanation by imposing an ordered (and clearly unsatisfactory) explanation upon the event himself.

Norman Mailer's account of the life of Lee Harvey Oswald, *Oswald's Tale*, refers to a similar need for an explanation of the event in order to turn back the dangerously chaotic 'absurdity' inherent in the possibility that Oswald was a lone gunman:

It is possible that the working hypothesis has become more important to the author than trying to discover the truth. For if Oswald remains intact as an important if dark protagonist, one has served a purpose: The burden of a prodigious American obsession has been lessened, and the air cleared of an historic scourge—absurdity. So long as Oswald is a petty figure, a lone twisted pathetic killer who happened to be in a position to kill a potentially great President, then ... America is cursed with an absurdity. There was no logic to the event and no sense of balance in the universe. Historical absurdity (like the war in Vietnam) breeds social disease.
(Mailer 1995, p606)

As Mailer argues, the trivial figure being Kennedy's sole assassin implies that the universe is absurd and fails to correspond to human logic, an unthinkable horrendous hypothesis. The alternative to such unthinkable absurdity (the existence of a conspiracy), while having different consequences is, for Mailer, just as abominable: "such a thesis also leaves us with horror: We are small, and the forces of evil are huge" (Mailer 1995, p606). Here Mailer is much closer to adopting what many postmodern novels take as being one of the major problems of paranoia than he is a re-shaper of it. Whilst many postmodern novels propose the idea that any vision of reality is a fictional construction, and that to regard it as absolute (particularly in the manner of such paranoid groups as Nazi Germany) can have terrible results, Mailer is here involved in reducing the chaotic complexity of the world to

numbingly simplistic categories of meaning. He cannot accept the idea that the universe fails to conform to human logic, and therefore constructs elaborate explanations in order to contradict this possibility, coming to the conclusion that some form of conspiracy must be afoot.

As should be clear from the above examples, there is a sometimes subtle distinction between the literary interrogation of paranoid practices and actual adherence to such practices. As an example of the extremely dangerous positions that uncritically paranoid world-views may reach, it is useful to turn to an all-too-obvious case of providing explanations for the state of the world through the paranoid mechanisms of scapegoating, *The Turner Diaries* (Pierce 1980). First published under the pseudonym Andrew McDonald, *The Turner Diaries* was written by Dr. William L. Pierce, a former physicist at Oregon State University who, after leaving academia to crusade against blacks and Jews, served as an assistant to the chief of the American Nazi Party in the 1960s, founded the National Alliance, and was active in both the George Lincoln Rockwell American Nazi party and the National Socialist White People's Party. He has asserted that he would like "to see North America become a white continent" and that "there is no way a society based on Aryan values can evolve peacefully from a society which has succumbed to Jewish spiritual corruption" (Robins 1997, p205). Given the author's personal history, the extravagantly bigoted content of *The Turner Diaries* comes as no surprise. The novel is set in America a year and a half after private ownership of firearms has been outlawed by 'The Cohen Act', and focuses upon the role of Earl Turner, the distinctly Aryan protagonist of the novel, in overthrowing the US government in the 1990s during 'The Great Revolution.' Turner is a member of 'the Organisation', a clandestine group that aims to restore white control by killing Jews and non-whites. The book's climax is a vividly detailed description of the execution of millions of Jews, blacks, Latinos, and 'race-traitors' at the hands of 'The Organisation.' The cover of the most recently published paperback reprint of *The Turner Diaries* features a white man aiming a sub-machine gun into the distance and a white woman holding a hand gun (the difference in the size of these weapons perhaps appealing to a typical reader's understanding of the relevance of gender distinctions). The publisher's advertisement of this edition of the novel features the slogans "This book features racist propaganda", "The FBI said it was the blueprint for the Oklahoma bombing", and "Many would like to see it banned. It is being published to alert and warn America" Fuelled by such advertising campaigns, by 1996 *The Turner Diaries* had sold more than 200,000 copies, becoming a staple constituent of most right-wing extremists' reading-lists (at this stage the book had been banned in Canada, but not in America). Among the possessions of Timothy McVeigh inventoried by law enforcement following his arrest on April 21, 1995, according to media accounts, was a copy of *The Turner Diaries*, said to be one of McVeigh's favourite books. Even more disturbing is the fact that, in 1984, American Nazi Robert Jay Mathews formed the fascist underground organisation 'The

Order' (named after the organisation in the book) actually using *The Turner Diaries* as his guide. The Order embarked on a fourteen month spree of Nazi terror that included numerous racially motivated assaults, several robberies and a few acts of counterfeiting. The group's murder of Jewish talk-show host Alan Berg was portrayed in Oliver Stone's 1989 film *Talk Radio*.

The obvious paranoid extremity of *The Turner Diaries* is easily identified. Best-selling author Michael Crichton's 1992 novel *The Rising Sun* presents a slightly more subtle case of paranoid scapegoating. Whilst Crichton seems to target some of the perceived failings and inefficiencies of American culture in *Rising Sun*, his focal point is, in fact, the Japanese, who are made to embody all that is devious, dangerous, and deeply un-American. Even his criticism of American culture is directed toward America's culpable failure to resist the subversive colonisation posed by the ruthless business practices of the Japanese. The plot of the novel focuses on Lieutenant Smith and Captain Connor's investigation of the murder of a young, blonde Caucasian prostitute found murdered on a boardroom table in the midst of major trade negotiations with a Japanese corporation. As symbolised by the conjunction of sex and big money inherent in the details of the murder scene, the killer turns out to be a Japanese executive acting in the service of a sophisticated conspiracy fuelled by Japanese yen and unnatural carnal desires. All the clues that the two detectives uncover point to a "Japanese perp", as the rabidly racist Lieutenant Graham describes him (Crichton 1992, p141) and, as Graham asserts, with every "'Nip ... wanting to fuck a Rose Bowl queen'", how could it possibly be otherwise? (Crichton 1992, p42).⁹⁷ Though Crichton inherently criticises the overtly expressed racism of Lieutenant Graham, the novel's plot and thematic structure actually support his underlying racist beliefs. Perhaps the most important point on which Crichton appears to actually agree with Graham's views is in the incessantly expressed desire of both to publicly expose Japanese attempts to cover up and conceal from the public eye their involvement in American society. The criticism lodged against Graham by the novel is focused on his ignorant lack of sophistication, rather than being a wholesale critical interrogation of the bigotry that motivates him. And though Crichton's character John Connor, a completely competent Los Angeles police detective who has lived in Japan and speaks Japanese masterfully, is described as having a deep understanding of Japanese culture, he frequently makes such sinophobic statements as: "[M]y friends always ask me to remember that [the Japanese] are human beings first and Japanese second ... Unfortunately, in my experience that is not always true" (Crichton 1992, p112). Thus the authority implied by Connor's immersion in Japanese culture functions precisely in advocating racist rhetoric that, somewhat

⁹⁷ In *Rising Sun*, the Japanese are also cast as being unrepentant sexual deviants. The murdered girl is depicted as dying at the hands of a "kinky" Japanese businessman who strangles his partner during sex (Crichton 1992, p142). There is even an insistence upon the alienness of the Japanese body with regard to sexual characteristics, a forensic technician detailing the numerous distinctions between American and Japanese semen, pubic hair and blood factors (Crichton 1992, p141).

paradoxically, labels the Japanese as "the most racist people on earth" (Crichton 1992, p256) and brands Americans who demur against such sentiments as "Chrysanthemum Kissers" to be equated with Nazi collaborators (Crichton 1992, p144). *Rising Sun* ultimately comes to blame the demise of the American economy (and the correlative demise of traditional American cultural and familial values) on the unscrupulously manipulative, corrupt and expansionist business practices that Crichton regards as the *sine qua non* of Japanese culture. Throughout the novel, the motto "the Japanese see business as war" (Crichton 1992, p112) is repeated to the extent that it becomes akin to a mantra, eternally chanted in order to ward off the Japanese evil eye. In articulating this position, Crichton states that he has "drawn heavily" on a group of writers (many of whom are known as 'revisionists') including Clyde Prestowitz, Jr., Karel van Wolferen, Pat Choate, Chalmers Johnson and James Fallows, whose works he cites as research sources in the book's bibliography (Crichton 1992, p404-407). The milder of these works argue that Japan has been indulged and spared criticism for years; the more extreme (such as Fallows's *More Like Us: Putting America's Native Strengths and Traditional Values to Work to Overcome the Asian Challenge* (Fallows 1989) and Clyde V. Prestowitz, Jr.'s *Trading Places: How We Are Giving Our Future to Japan and How to Reclaim It* (Prestowitz 1989)) view Japan as a rogue nation operating under predatory and adversarial rules of social and economic behaviour.⁹⁸

Despite their superficial dissimilarities, both Pierce's *The Turner Diaries* and Crichton's *Rising Sun* are books that, unlike most of the other works analysed here, uncritically partake in paranoid modes of narrative victimisation of scapegoats. At times, however, the line between conscious examination and critique of scapegoating and unconscious incorporation of its modes of operation can be somewhat hazy. The novels of Richard

⁹⁸ When the film version of *Rising Sun* was released in 1993, much of Crichton's original polemic against the Japanese ^(page) has been removed. Though the industry made much of the refusal of Japanese-owned film companies such as Columbia, Universal, and TriStar to bid on the book, Rupert Murdoch's Twentieth Century Fox scooped up film rights. In a key move, the ethnicity of both the murderer and of one of the detectives was changed, director Philip Kaufman making these and other changes that strayed from the original tone of the book at the cost of his collaboration with Crichton and Michael Backes, who wanted to stay closer to the original content of the book. Despite all of this, public protests against the film's racist content were immediately forthcoming. See, for example, (Iverem 1993). At the very beginning of the movie, as Captain Connor (Sean Connery) and Lieutenant Smith (Wesley Snipes) are on their way to the murder scene at the offices of a giant Japanese corporation, their initial dialogue establishes the fact that this homicide investigation is different from most. The point is made that, despite the fact that the two are physically located in America, they are now entering a world that is totally foreign. The world of this monstrous corporation is depicted by the film as looking so alien that, at first, viewers are not even aware that the locale is Los Angeles. The fears that the film version of *Rising Sun* plays upon have to do with the notion that the Japanese are making the American landscape dangerous for Americans. Though Hollywood often turns to numerous varieties of Others, whether these be alien creatures or resident aliens, in order to cast the role of the 'bad guy', *Rising Sun* relentlessly plays on racial stereotypes. Every Japanese character in the film is menacing, sneaky, cold, inscrutable or ruthless. There is even a sub-set of Japanese characters who are depicted as sexual predators who have stocked their corporate brothel with all-American blondes.

Condon provide a case in point. Best known for writing the novel *The Manchurian Candidate* (upon which the famous film of the same name was based), all of Condon's novels are thematically centred around various forms of conspiracy. In his 1971 novel *The Vertical Smile*, the moronic Duncan Mulligan is proposed as a Presidential candidate by a cabal of conspiring political string-pullers. Duncan's speeches within the novel reveal not only his own lack of political sophistication, but also the bigoted rhetoric of scapegoating integral to contemporary American political campaigning:

'If called I will respond,' Duncan said. 'If nominated I will accept. If drafted, I shall run. If elected, I shall serve. And from the ramparts of a just democracy, defending law and order, I will fight Mao, I will fight Castro, I will fight the memory of Ho Chi Minh, and I will fight the uppityness of the American Negro.'
(Condon 1973 c1971, p22)

In one remarkably long speech (lasting well over ten pages), the paranoid racist ideology underlying Duncan's rhetoric is exposed to the reader by its particular subtextual attention to the greed and reactionary violence that motivates his bid for Presidency:

'Would you permit a stranger whose skin is black and therefore a person of profound ignorance and known animal instincts and therefore sexually depraved, a person therefore who, if given your bathtub, would only use it as a place to store coal or gin or fatback or whatever it is they eat? Would you permit this person to enter this house you own, without invitation, then proceed to set fire to your rich drapes while his animal smell permeated your fresh carpets and delicate linen? Or, would you sit mildly by without a thought of protesting while a bomb-carrying, drug-obsessed youth of say twenty-one or twenty-two ... came screaming into *your* house, on *your* property which you had bought and paid for and in which you had lived through the centuries of your nation, unmolested by anarchy and revolution—would you allow this hairy, unkempt thing ... this bum, this effete snob, this sexually permissive addict who blows up property and throws rocks at the National Guard and calls our policemen pigs—would you permit this *thing* to tell you that you must rearrange the furniture you own within the four walls of the house you bought and paid for long years before?
(Condon 1973 c1971, p269)

Despite this critical impulse, *The Vertical Smile* maintains a certain detachment from its own assumption that there is a conspiratorial backbone to the American system of government. While it does ridicule the particularities of certain paranoid veins of thought, it does so by having a conspiratorial plot-foundation and a paranoid narrative. For example, one prominent character in *The Vertical Smile*, Tristram Noon, is employed by the government to stage public riots. This ruse forms a vital part of the Machiavellian schemes accomplished by the conspiratorial cabal in order to maintain its stranglehold on the American political arena. At one point it is stated that the 1968 riot in Chicago at the Democrats convention was, in fact, planned in immense detail: "costumed Police and costumed Children and fear and disgrace and bleeding and violence and shame—more than enough to sweep the Republicans into office on a law-and-order platform" (Condon 1973 c1971, p32-33). Thus Condon presents the idea that even resistance to government is staged: resistance to the conspiracy is part of the conspiracy itself. As is said about Noon's supposedly subversive activities: "He had worked, apparently, for the overthrow of

the government under retainer from the government" (Condon 1973 c1971, p34). Amusing as this idea may be, it effectively co-opts all potentially subversive political action into an all-embracing conspiracy that Condon has left unquestioned within the novel. A similar ubiquity of conspiracy is also present in Condon's 1969 novel *Mile High*. In *Mile High*, the fictional character Edward Courance West is presented as being the man who engineered almost all of early- to mid-twentieth-century history for his own profit. As well as being personally responsible for such historically prominent incidents as Prohibition and the Wall Street Crash of October 1929, West is the sole sovereign secretly responsible for, amongst other things, the election of governments and the evolution of the Cold War. He is said by one particularly knowledgeable character to be "the whole wind behind Joe McCarthy" (Condon 1972 c1969, p278). In *Mile High*, Edward Courance West effectively is twentieth-century American history, as this history is almost completely constituted by his conspiratorial machinations. In Condon's novels, American history is conspiracy.

It is undoubtedly the 1959 novel *The Manchurian Candidate* for which Richard Condon is best known. In this novel, a group of soldiers in the Korean war is captured by an elite group of Russian and Chinese communist leaders and is brainwashed by Dr Yen Lo, a follower of Pavlovian psychology. One of the novel's protagonists, Raymond Shaw, is made a public hero upon his return from the war, ostensibly for bravely saving his company from certain death in a violent battle in Manchuria (a fictional event implanted in the company's memory by Dr Lo.) Raymond, along with the rest of his company, does not remember being brainwashed; his suspicion is triggered by certain events that gradually lead him to uncover the truth of the fateful events that took place in Manchuria. However, this does not occur before Raymond's mental programming leads him to attempt to assassinate a prominent presidential candidate, this being part of a larger communist conspiracy to undermine the political stability of the United States.

Raymond's stepfather, Johnny Iselin, functions in the novel as a parody of Joseph McCarthy. Like McCarthy, Iselin is a Senator who plays the 'numbers game' of asserting that there are a number of 'card-carrying communists' in the Defence Department, this number varying from 207 to 58. Eventually the 'numbers game' is explained as being a rhetorical ruse intended to confuse people over the number of communists in the Defence Department, hence deflecting attention from the question as to whether there actually were any communists employed by the Department (Condon 1979 c1959, p126-129).

Whilst Iselin is a continual focus of the novel's critical intent, the prime antagonist is Raymond's overbearing and manipulative mother. Raymond's mother is eventually revealed to be in league with the communist conspirators, and to be the 'operator' of her own son. The ultimate intention of Raymond's mother, however, is to double-cross the communists, having Raymond assassinate a presidential candidate in order that the fully

prepared Iselin (who would fake being shot in the arm) could rise to the occasion as his natural successor. The further aim of Raymond's mother would then be to convince Iselin to blame the assassination on a communist conspiracy and wage an all-out retributive war on the Kremlin, so that America might eventually rule the entire world (including the communist blocs of Russia and China), Raymond's mother pulling the strings. Being largely under the control of his wife, Iselin himself plays a strange role in the novel. It is obvious that he uses anti-communist rhetoric as a political tool rather than believing in it, inventing the fantasy of communist insiders who are undermining America for his own political ends much as McCarthy has commonly been accused of. However, he in turn is cynically used by his wife who was initially in league with conspiratorial communist forces. Thus the novel's parody of McCarthyism, which functions via the presentation of Iselin's paranoid rhetoric concerning the existence of a communist conspiracy, is ironically undercut by the textual inclusion of an actual communist conspiracy. Though *The Manchurian Candidate* is not dominated by the sorts of all-embracing conspiracy to be found in *The Vertical Smile* and *Mile High* (at the end of the novel Raymond kills both Johnny Iselin and his mother, and then himself, ending the American side of the conspiracy at least) the unproblematised existence of a communist conspiracy in the novel once again shortcircuits any wholesale critique of paranoid logic, by its centrality to the novel's plot structure. The critique of paranoid rhetoric in Condon's novels thus relies upon its own paranoid impulses. In almost all of Condon's novels some form of governmental conspiracy becomes the handily available prime-mover of narrative action. The conspiracy is Condon's narrative scapegoat, by which all plot crises can be explained, and to which all of the targets of his criticism can ultimately be connected.

This paranoid drive for determinate explanation is, more often than not, denied by most postmodern novels. Robert Stone's 1964 novel *Hall of Mirrors*, for example, places a great deal of emphasis on the confusion of the individual in the face of a rapidly changing economic and sociopolitical landscape.⁹⁹ The cynically manipulative character Bingamon is shown providing an 'explanation' via a paranoid worldview that involves the persecution of a variety of folk-devil scapegoats, and is implicitly criticised by the novel for doing so;¹⁰⁰ the novel itself consciously resists that urge. Stone views the obsessive desire for overtly constructed determinate explanation as implicated in the sorts of injustices and inequalities inherent in the paranoid worldview proposed by Bingamon, who provides

⁹⁹ As one character remarks, "there is a deep confusion in the popular heart and mind. The pop heart and mind demand assurance. Unusual times demand unusual hustles. The explanation number is very big" (Stone 1981 c1964, p223).

¹⁰⁰ See particularly (Stone 1981 c1964, pp253-255, 296-298, 324-326).

simplistic explanation at the expense of ignoring elusive and complex truths.¹⁰¹ Rather than presenting the revelation of an all-embracing conspiracy (which, on the novel's terms, would function as a somewhat facile and simplistic attempt to achieve closure through completely explaining the confusion of the individual in the face of a complex arena of social inequality and political injustice), the novel avoids closure, denying the urge to find solutional solace in simplistic paranoid systems of meaning, commenting only upon the fact that this scene of inequality and injustice is, in fact, worsened by the actions of Bingamon's deluded followers.

Such critiques of the underlying impulses of paranoia are numerous, for the great bulk of postmodern novels portray the paranoid rhetoric of scapegoating in order to reveal its implication in a variety of destructive and harmful social practices. Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*, for example, criticises the public nature of the 1953 trial and execution of the alleged 'atomic spies', Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, representing it as a burlesque spectacle presided over by the master-showman character Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam is the novel's representative of the dark side of American national identity, whose very existence is wholly dependent upon the popular identification and persecution of fictively defined national enemies. The novel ends with a vision of 'the public burning' (execution) of the Rosenbergs as "The Sam Slick Show!", a large-scale dramatic production replete with dancing girls, house band, advertising, charismatic preachers, a heart-rending rendition of the American national anthem, and a pageant showcasing American achievement and the evils of Communism (Coover 1978 c1976, p510-512). Acting as the ringmaster to these circus performances, Uncle Sam hosts a competition awarding money for the most entertaining readings from the Rosenberg's "Death House Letters", which attracts a litany of famous entertainment teams such as Boris Karloff and Elsa Lanchester, Amos 'n' Andy, Jimmy Durante and Garry Moore, Bud Abbot and Lou Costello, Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, and The Marx Brothers (Coover 1978 c1976, pp522-526, 555-558). Throughout the show, the realms of entertainment and politics are progressively melded. Betty Crocker does the catering for the show while McCarthy appears "[p]romising the revelation of 'a conspiracy of infamy so black'" (Coover 1978 c1976, p562-564). Whilst Uncle Sam is the master of ceremonies, Cecil B. De Mille acts as the show's director (Coover 1978 c1976, p569). The event ends with Richard Nixon

¹⁰¹ A similarly critical emphasis upon the priority of simplistic explanation over the indefinable complexities of truth is provided by Gore Vidal's novel *Messiah*. Speaking of the rather unnerving phenomena posed by the numerous unexplained UFO sightings of the post-war era, the narrator remarks, "explanation, in the end, was all that people required. It made no difference how extraordinary the explanation was, if only they could know *what* was happening ... if only this much could definitely be stated, the readers of newspapers would have felt secure ... It made little difference whether these mysterious blobs of light were hallucinations, intergalactic visitors or military weapons; the important thing was to explain them" (Vidal 1973 c1955, p9-10).

delivering an extended anti-communist tirade, followed by fireworks and fanfares (Coover 1978 c1976, p575, 594).¹⁰²

It is particularly telling that Coover's conflation of the public realms of mass entertainment and populist politics focuses upon a national American incident of scapegoating. In *The Public Burning*, the spectacle's function in leading up to the execution of the Rosenbergs allows Uncle Sam to construct an easy propagandistic polarisation of 'good-guys' and 'bad-guys' (Us and Them, Self and Other), an unsatisfactorily reductive paranoid worldview that Coover suggests holds notable similarities to the overly simplistic character constructions of both Hollywood and extremist political rhetoric. This dramatically overstated polarisation is shown by *The Public Burning* to be an integral element of mass paranoia, which aims to create a stable sense of social identity through the identification and persecution of fictive enemies. More importantly, however, Coover's protracted conflation of the realms of paranoid politics and mass entertainment insists upon the similarities between the two, asserting the fact that both are forms of gaudy public spectacle and manipulative propaganda.¹⁰³ According to Coover, entertainment and paranoid politics are both forms of 'show-biz', of fictive appearances unmoored in reality. To mistake the fictional presentations of paranoid world-creations for absolute reality is thus an error (somewhat akin to mistaking a Hollywood movie for reality) that can lead to the zealous persecution of the innocent.

For the postmodern novel, then, the dangers of paranoid world-creations arise from their lack of self-reflexivity, their failure to recognise the fictional, contingent nature of their particular view of the world. Earlier analyses have demonstrated that, for the postmodern novel, all world-creations are fictional, and that some sense of structured order must be imposed on the chaotic postmodern world in order for the individual to be able to meaningfully respond to his or her surroundings. But there is still the implication that one

¹⁰² The novel also focuses upon the fact that Nixon often played the lead role in various dramatic productions, this being related to the fact that Ethel Rosenberg had an early career as an actress.

¹⁰³ E.L. Doctorow's 1972 novel *The Book of Daniel*, a fictional account of the lives of the Rosenberg's children, similarly focuses upon the 'spectacular' nature of scapegoating. Despite the fact that Doctorow's characters are not known by the same names as those actually involved in the event, the novel's basis in the Rosenberg incident is easily identifiable. The family name that Doctorow assigns the Rosenberg characters, Isaacson, denotes the family as being the 'sons' of 'Isaac': the biblical character who was offered as a human sacrifice to God by his father, Abraham, upon God's demand (Genesis 22). The novel thus emphasises the significance of the fact that the Rosenberg's were easily publicly identifiable as being Jewish and thus predisposed to being treated as sacrificial scapegoats. The protagonist Daniel's first memory of the affair recounted by the novel is a traumatic experience in the midst of huge crowds of public protesters (Doctorow 1973 c1971, p20-22). The novel later presents some of Daniel's writings that comment upon the popular propensity for identifying fictive enemies: 'Many historians have noted an interesting phenomenon in American life immediately after the war. In the councils of government fierce partisanship replaces the necessary political coalitions of wartime. In the great arena of social relations—business, labour, the community—violence rises, fear and

Section 3

Paranoid Order

As society or any system becomes more 'rational', more complexly divided and arranged, the individual becomes less able to grasp the totality of the system—to see it whole, to observe how it functions, to explain it.... Detail and number overwhelm the imagination, and one loses any sense of an informing whole, a unifying principle, a plan or purpose that links apparently uncoordinated developments to each other and to their effects.

Peter L. Cooper, *Signs and Symptoms*

Like other sorts of paranoia, it is nothing less than the onset, the leading edge, of the discovery that *everything is connected* . . .

Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*

While the term 'paranoia' enjoys widespread use in denoting the state of mind of anyone who exhibits unnaturally suspicious inclinations or fears conspiracies levelled against his or her person, the original Ancient Greek meaning of the word (*para-nous*: beside-mind) was much looser, referring to general states of craziness and mental deterioration, implying that the individual was distracted, the mind beside itself or dislocated.¹⁰⁵ After the original meaning of the word fell into disuse, the term disappeared from classifications of mental disorders altogether until its re-emergence in eighteenth-century Germany where it was used to refer to delusional states categorised as disorders of the intellect rather than of the emotion (Lewis 1970).¹⁰⁶ Early modern formulations of paranoia were made by Kraepelin, the father of modern psychiatry, who coined the early term *dementia paranoides*, implying that the illness was incurable, deteriorating and dementing.¹⁰⁷ Later formulations of paranoia defined it as a functional psychosis, marked particularly by delusions of grandeur and/or persecution but without intellectual deterioration. Yehuda Fried and Joseph Agassi's groundbreaking work *Paranoia: A Study in Diagnosis* confirmed earlier suspicions as to the 'rationality' of paranoia with the conclusion: "Paranoia is an extreme case by the very fact that paranoia is by definition a quirk of the intellectual apparatus, a logical delusion" (Fried 1976, p2). According to contemporary psychoanalysis, the paranoiac is logical, meticulously so.¹⁰⁸ The paranoiac perceives well

¹⁰⁵ The term 'paranoia' was first used by Hippocrates in a non-specific sense, referring to all disorganised or delirious thinking resulting in mental deterioration (Swanson 1970, p24).

¹⁰⁶ Vogel introduced the term 'paranoia' in a manner approaching common modern usage in 1772 (Swanson 1970, p24).

¹⁰⁷ This same attributes were also attributed to *dementia praecox*, an obsolete term for schizophrenia.

¹⁰⁸ Case studies almost unanimously cite predominant characteristics of extreme intelligence in paranoiacs. See particularly (Lewis 1970), (Chadwick 1992), (Fried 1976), and (Siegel 1994). On the subject of the rigorous rationality of paranoia, it is also interesting to note that Californian Professor of Psychiatry Kenneth Colby (MD) chose to pursue his interests in computer simulations of human

and correctly, and at times his/her 'fundamental assumptions' are no worse than the assumptions of society. What distinguishes the paranoid from the non-paranoid are the 'integrative principles' by which the paranoid constructs a vision of his or her world. These organisational processes by which the paranoid orders his or her perceptions of the world lead to a vision of the world that is overly integrated, too meticulously logical to allow for the play of chance and coincidence that forms such a large part of life. Thus the mental weakness of the paranoid lies in what otherwise hold sway as a form of rational superiority.

DeLillo's fictions accord with this characterisation of madness as an intense rationality, often alluding to the idea of paranoia as a mental structuring of chaos. A character in DeLillo's *The Names* goes so far as to assert that 'madness' and 'structure' are almost synonymous:

'Madness has a structure. We might say madness is all structure. We might say structure is inherent in madness. There is not the one without the other.'
(DeLillo 1987 c1982, p210)

While there may be structures in madness, this is not to suggest that all perceived structures are necessarily 'mad'. However, the narrator of *Americana* does suggest that any form of structure is a fictive construct, containing obvious similarities to the narrative constructions of literature:

Too much has been disfigured in the name of symmetry. Our lives were the shortest distance between two points, birth and chaos, but what appears on these pages represents, in its orderly proportions, almost a delivery from chaos.... What I was involved in was merely a literary venture, an attempt to find pattern and motive, to make of something wild a squeamish thesis on the essence of the nation's soul. To formulate. To seek links.
(DeLillo 1990 c1971, pp345, 349)

Whilst the works of DeLillo present the reader with the idea that all notions of reality are, in a certain fashion, fictional, it is the individual paranoid's divergence from consensual visions of reality that defines his world-creation as 'delusional', leaving him or her open to easy criticism from a normative position stabilised by consensual assent. The distinction between group paranoia and the paranoia of the individual lies primarily in the process of consensual validation. The mechanisms of consensual validation are the *sine qua non* of group paranoia, but the isolated position of the individual paranoid (outside the consensually validated world-creation of the group) discredits his/her beliefs in the eyes of others, placing him/her in an alienated position outside normative perceptions of reality.¹⁰⁹

thought patterns through the creation of a computer program that mimicked paranoia. See (Colby 1975). As Saul Bellow writes in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, "paranoiacs ... are more passionate for pure truth than other madmen" (Bellow 1970, p26).

¹⁰⁹ This position is also articulated by Cornelius Castoriadis's work *The World in Fragments*. Castoriadis states that, in such situations as paranoia, "there is a construction—or better, creation—of a world that makes sense for the subject (and does not make sense for others).... Such 'meaning making'

DeLillo's general focus is upon group constructions of consensual reality and the effects of these realities upon individual adherents. Thomas Pynchon (to be examined at length in this section) presents characters readily identified by the reader as paranoid, ostensibly because they construct their own, often delusional individual translations of reality. Despite these differences, certain similarities between presentations of group and individual paranoia are marked. Just as the postmodern novel presents mass paranoia as a communal defensive response to times of crisis, many representations of individual acts of paranoia portray it as a similarly defensive reaction to an untenably chaotic environment. But, whereas DeLillo's writings have been shown to be concerned with the consensual fictions by which we live our lives, the works of Thomas Pynchon scrutinise the individual processes involved in ordering and structuring the chaos of the postmodern world. Pynchon's works thus present the reader with presentations of paranoia that raise a variety of distinct issues. Sometimes related to the concerns raised by the works of DeLillo, at times they are also particular to Pynchon's own literary worlds.

With regard to the idea that the isolated position of the individual paranoid (outside the consensually validated world-creation of the group) discredits his/her beliefs in the eyes of others by placing him/her in an alienated position outside normative perceptions of reality, it is important to note that the paranoid characters within Pynchon's works operate beyond the pale of normative vision. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, for example, any possibility of a stable textual norm (both for itself as fiction and for its protagonist, Oedipa Maas, as she experiences this world) dissolves because the men whom Oedipa relies upon for information and support "project a series of wholly divergent views and preclude the possibility of a normative vision" (Johnston 1991, p58). This does not mean that Oedipa's men themselves are excluded from the possibility of a stable normative vision (such as may be provided by a consensually validated vision of reality), but, as John Johnston points out, that the potential for Oedipa to rely upon such a normative vision as an interpretative foundation is broken down by their actions:

The series of male characters Oedipa encounters incarnate a variety of interpretative attitudes or postures, but taken together they exclude the very

(*faire sens*) is henceforth to be understood as the instauration of a certain sort of representational coherency, even when to the detriment of the organic, to the detriment of pleasure (even of representational pleasure), and to the detriment—in psychosis—of coherency with respect to others' representations, their social significations, what Piera called 'the discourse of the whole'" (Castoriadis 1997, p199-200). According to Castoriadis, this lack of coherency between the individual and 'the whole' almost always leads to "a conflict, or essential noncoherency, between what makes sense for the thought of the [paranoid] subject and what makes sense for 'the whole'" (Castoriadis 1997, p202). See (Castoriadis 1997, p196-210—"The Construction of the World in Psychosis"). Just as Castoriadis remarks that, in cases of individual paranoia "Before all else, the subject has to create a certain meaning for himself" (Castoriadis 1997, p201). W.W. Meisnerr similarly defines the 'paranoid construction' of the individual as "a cognitive process, by which incoming impressions are organised into a pattern of meaning which is primarily validated by reference to subjective need rather than objective evidence or consensual agreement" (Meisnerr 1978, p599).

possibility of a normalising perspective. All are 'crazy' or aberrant or marginal in some crucial way.
(Johnston 1991, p71)

In Pynchon's texts too there is an absence of easily recognisable authorial endorsed meaning that might function to provide a normalising perspective for the reader. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, for example, there is no one narrative voice but rather a multiplicity of fragmented, inconsistent, and at times contradictory narrative voices. No one narrative voice has any essential or ultimate precedence over any other. Every kind of discourse is included in the mammoth postmodern work (science, pantomime, burlesque, cinema, cabaret, card-games, songs, comic strips, spy stories, history, encyclopaedia, visionary meditations and dreams, might run a preliminary list), these complying with, complementing, and competing with each other. This is a typically postmodern style of narrative that works to exclude the totalisation of meaning through the institution of polymorphic diversity. As Tony Tanner writes: "There is only one text but it contains a multiplicity of surfaces; modes of discourse are constantly turning into objects of discourse with no one stable discourse holding them together" (Tanner 1982, p77). According to Tanner, *Gravity's Rainbow* is about "all the various ways in which men try to control and coerce realities both seen and unseen—from science to seance" (Tanner 1982, p77). More than this, *Gravity's Rainbow* is concerned with the way in which both science and seance are interpretative categories through which the world is viewed—via the power of the shaping imagination—as structured and ordered. That this shaping imagination should be so readily identifiable as paranoid within Pynchon's work is perhaps a result of the fact that so much of it is concerned with the preterite: the stigmatised outcasts and exiles of the world who operate outside normative, consensual visions of reality. As will become evident in this section, it is through conflating the institutionalised normative discourses of consensual reality with its paranoid outlaws, and the dissolution of boundaries between the two (through demonstration of their relativistic equivalence, which in effect equates to an exclusion of the normative) that Pynchon reveals how thought processes that are identified by his works as paranoid are utilised by all humankind in interpreting and projectively constructing the world of lived experience.

Pynchon's entire oeuvre is almost entirely dominated by elements of cosmic conspiracy and paranoid fantasy. His first work, *V.*, consists of Herbert Stencil's search for the mysterious person, object or place 'V', convinced that "his quarry fitted in with the Big One, the century's master cabal ... the ultimate Plot Which Has No Name"¹¹⁰ *The Crying of Lot 49* is concerned with Oedipa Maas's search for the shadowy organisation 'the Tristero', intricately connected to the renegade underground postal service 'WASTE' and its historical opponents 'Thurn & Taxis', and features a musical group called 'The Paranoids'.

¹¹⁰ (Pynchon 1975 c1963, p226). All further references to this text will be indicated parenthetically, marked 'V'.

one of whom exclaims: "'Oh,' ... 'you hate me too'"¹¹¹ *Gravity's Rainbow*, set toward the end of the Second World War, sees Tyrone Slothrop (who is convinced that 'They' are out to get him and that there is a rocket somewhere with his name on it¹¹²) searching for the elusive '00000' rocket, and makes numerous digressions on the "Puritan reflex of seeking other orders beyond the visible, also known as paranoia" (GR, p188), including the humorous 'Proverbs for Paranoids', as all number of plots and conspiracies converge on the rocket. *Vineland* sees FBI-led conspiracies pitted against the counter-cultural revolutionaries of the 1960s. And his latest work, *Mason & Dixon*, following the intrepid British surveyors Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon upon their journey to carve out the 'Mason-Dixon line', contains an abundance of secretive freemasons, conspiratorial Jesuits, and paranoid Americans, each suspecting the next of being an agent or a spy.

A common trope within these novels is a ^{characters} character or characters' quest for 'the truth' of some object, event, person, or group. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa Maas becomes obsessed with the shadowy underworld group the Tristero; in *V.*, Herbert Stencil pursues the mythical female figure V.; and in *Gravity's Rainbow*, a cast of characters, including Tyrone Slothrop and the Schwartzkommando, search for the '00000' rocket. In all of these cases the object of the quest and its relevance to the individual in question are determined by obsessive, paranoid systems of interpretation and projection. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, this is demonstrated by the fact that Oedipa's search to discover the truth behind the elusive 'Tristero' starts with a 'will' (ostensibly the 'Last Will and Testament' of Pierce Inverarity) in pursuit of which she not only discovers the people of America who have been metaphorically disinherited¹¹³ but also the power of her own, personal will: the ability of her shaping imagination to determine her fugitive paranoid interpretation of the world. The bulk of this section will examine Pynchon's presentation of the power of paranoid styles of interpretation to shape characters' visions of the world.

The basic problems of communication and interpretation are emphasised in *The Crying of Lot 49* in that all information Oedipa receives concerning the Tristero is received second or third hand, highlighting the problem of textual transmission.¹¹⁴ Communication is a

¹¹¹ (Pynchon 1979 c1967, p17). All further references to this text will be indicated parenthetically, marked 'L49'.

¹¹² (Pynchon 1973, p25). All further references to this text will be indicated parenthetically, marked 'GR'.

¹¹³ As well as learning that the possible founder of the Tristero "styled himself El Desheredado, The Disinherited" (L49, p110), Oedipa's quest leads her to a discovery of "God knew how many citizens, deliberately choosing not to communicate by US Mail.... a calculated withdrawal, from the life of the Republic, from its machinery.... the separate, silent, unsuspected world" (L49, p86).

¹¹⁴ For a detailed analysis of the numerous cases of problematised textual transmission in *The Crying of Lot 49*, see (Duyhuizen 1991).

prominent theme within the novel, highlighted by the concern of Oedipa's search with the historical details of postal networks, its part origin in the misspelling (or is it?) of 'postmaster' on the envelope of a letter that she receives from her husband (L49, p30), and its conduct through the connection of clues arising from "the stamp collection Pierce had left ...—thousands of little coloured windows into deep vistas of space and time" (L49, p29). Apart from the complications due to most of Oedipa's information's deriving from other people (who in turn refer Oedipa to yet further removed secondary and intermediary sources of possible disinformation), the ambiguous information that Oedipa gains regarding the Tristero usually relates first and foremost to WASTE or Thurn & Taxis, information at yet another remove from the Tristero. There is an obvious irony in the fact that one of the men whom Oedipa goes to for information, Mr. Thoth (named after the mythological Ancient Egyptian god of learning and wisdom, worshipped as the inventor of writing and the scribe of *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*) cannot distinguish his own memories from a cartoon he has recently seen on television (L49, p63-64). On top of this, the story that Mr. Thoth tells Oedipa was handed down to him from his own grandfather, an old man even at that time. As Oedipa laments: "Two very old men. All these fatigued brain cells between herself and the truth" (L49, p65).¹¹⁵ These problems in interpretation obviously jeopardise the veracity of Oedipa's reconstruction of events, serving to distance her from the object of her search. Eventually, Oedipa's sources of information mysteriously die or disappear. This "stripping away" (L49, p105) not only increasingly leaves Oedipa to rely on herself for interpretation, providing an increased threat of dilated interpretative solipsism, but also provides an additional set of suspicious events to provoke the paranoid mind. Amid all of this interpretative dissonance is Oedipa's belief in the textual significance of the world:

¹¹⁵ The novel's reference to the tension between the two different notions of entropy of thermodynamics and communications theory in the 'Maxwell's Demon' episode is also relevant here, particularly in its allusion to the idea of the entropy used in communications theory (as Nefastis says of Maxwell's Demon, "Communication is the key" (L49, p72)), according to which, as information is communicated from one point to the next, the degree of communicational certainty diminishes, elements of randomness and chaos increasing the potential for new signals, unintended information (that may obscure the originally intended 'message') arising randomly. See particularly Warren Weaver's commentary on Claude Shannon's 'The Mathematical Theory of Communication' (Weaver 1962 c1949b). A similar problem of establishing veracity arising due to the possibility of the corruption of communication during textual transmission is also highlighted by Pynchon's most recent novel, *Mason & Dixon*. The less than reliable narrator of *Mason & Dixon*, the Reverend Wicks Cherrycoke, only subsists in the family home due to the fact that his tall tales keep the children of the house occupied and out of trouble "for as long as he may keep the children amus'd, he may remain, —too much evidence of Juvenile Rampage at the wrong moment, however, and Boppo! 'twill be Out the Door with him, where waits the Winter's Block and Blade" (Pynchon 1997, p6-7). However much he succeeds in entertaining the children with his tale, the intimation being that this requirement taints the truth of the tale through the necessity of added excitement and the stricture of unsuitable material, they too express doubts about the veracity of certain elements of his tale. Cherrycoke is continually caught referring to documents that he could never have seen and assuming or hypothesising when no documents or first-hand experience is available. See particularly (Pynchon 1997, pp146, 393).

The ordered swirl of houses and streets, from this high angle, sprang at her now with the same unexpected, astonishing clarity as the circuit card had. Though she knew even less about radios than about Southern California, there were to both outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate.
(L49, p14-15)

Oedipa's search for the Tristero primarily consists of acts of textual interrogation and hermeneutic inquiry. Even at an early stage, this search is conducted through pursuing the meanings of words, phrases and symbols, such as the acronyms WASTE ("WE AWAIT SILENT TRISTERO'S EMPIRE" (L49, p116)) and DEATH ("DON'T EVER ANTAGONISE THE HORN" (L49, p84)); the muted horn symbol (L49, pp34, 67, etc.) and its referent in *The Courier's Tragedy*: "*And Tacit lies the gold once-knotted horn*" (L49, p67); the children's rhyme "Tristoe, Tristoe, one, two, three./Turning taxi from across the sea" (L49, p82); and the word Tristero itself (or 'Trystero' as it is often denoted). As her search continues, Oedipa comes to rely on actual texts, such as translations and variants of Richard Wharfinger's Jacobean play 'The Courier's Tragedy' (most of which is related within the novel itself). The linguistic nature of her quest is further accentuated by the statement that Oedipa's 1950s education made her: "unfit perhaps for marches and sit-ins, but just a whiz at pursuing strange words in Jacobean texts" (L49, p72). The director of the play, Randolph Driblette, responds unsympathetically to this task when Oedipa questions him about the text upon which his performance of the play was based: "'Why,' ... 'is everybody so interested in texts?' ... 'You guys, you're like Puritans are about the Bible. So hung up on words, words'" (L49, p53). As Driblette's statement indicates, Oedipa's interpretative connection of "gemlike clues ... To make up for her having lost the direct, epileptic Word" (L49, p81) contains an obvious similarity to the quest for the revelation-bearing Word of God. This alludes not only to the Puritan attitude toward the Bible (as Emory Bortz tells Oedipa: "Remember that Puritans were utterly devoted, like literary critics, to the Word" (L49, p107)), but also to the Puritan obsession with seeking signs and omens in everyday occurrences. Further evidence of this association of paranoia with the puritan mind is supplied by *Gravity's Rainbow's* report of "a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia" (GR, p188).¹¹⁶ *Gravity's Rainbow* further mentions paranoid protagonist Slothrop's Puritan ancestors in a passage wryly confounding the modern notion of 'genetic predisposition' with Calvinist determinism:

... he's genetically predisposed—all those earlier Slothrops packing Bibles around the blue hilltops as part of their gear, memorising chapter and verse the structures

¹¹⁶ On this topic, see particularly Scott Sanders essay 'Pynchon's Paranoid History' (Sanders 1976). Writing of the chief analogue of Calvinist theology in America, Puritanism, Scott Sanders remarks that, "According to Calvin every particle of dust, every act, every thought, every creature is governed by the will of God, and yields clues to the divine plan", and argues that, for Pynchon, "paranoia is the last retreat of the Puritan imagination" (Sanders 1976, p139-140). For discussion of the connections between Puritanism and the peculiarly American characteristics of the tendency to paranoid mechanisms, see Appendix I.

of Arks, Temples, Visionary Thrones—all the materials and dimensions. Data behind which always, nearer or farther, was the numinous certainty of God. (GR, p241-242)

When Slothrop enters his search for hidden meanings and conspiracy, this too is shown to be intimately related to his Puritan ancestry: "Signs will find him ... and ancestors will reassert themselves ... his own WASPs in buckled black, who heard God clamouring to them in every turn of a leaf or cow loose among apple orchards in autumn" (GR, p281). The association of this religious tone with paranoia is also present in *The Crying of Lot 49*. It is noteworthy that Oedipa's first experience of San Narciso as a printed circuit leads her to the suspicion that: "a revelation ... trembled just past the threshold of her understanding", Oedipa sensing herself "at the centre of an odd, religious instant" (L49, p15). A similar feeling is present when Oedipa admits: "That's what would come to haunt her most, perhaps: the way it fitted, logically, together. As if (as she'd guessed that first minute in San Narciso) there were revelation in progress all around her" (L49, p29). Though Oedipa may continually sense the progress of revelation around her, the climax of such revelation is eternally deferred. The 'uncovering' of revelation is, within the text, ever incomplete. Both Oedipa's and the reader's expectations of denouement or resolution are postponed to the point of preclusion. The book ends with both Oedipa and the reader awaiting the upcoming (and textually absent) "crying of lot 49" (L49, p127).¹¹⁷ Presented within the novel as the 'crying' of a stamp auction at which Oedipa hopes to find members of the Tristero bidding for altered, 'Tristeroed', stamps, the status of 'the crying of lot 49' as the title of the book comes to imply that at the end of the text the reader is still waiting for the central truth of the novel.¹¹⁸

The Crying of Lot 49 is full of images of perpetually postponed denouement and of disappointed expectations of revealed meaning. Oedipa's seduction by Metzger at Echo Courts, for example, presents her donning numerous layers of clothes for a game of 'Strip Botticelli', the crux of which centres on Oedipa's expectation that the movie showing on television will (as is common) end happily (L49, p22-23). Despite the fact that this game seems to head inexorably toward Oedipa's seduction, expectations of the naked truth are disappointed. The movie ends unconventionally with the death of its protagonists (after a

¹¹⁷ These are, in fact, the very last words of the novel.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Schaub has argued that the significance of the number '49' in the novel's title lies in its intertextual allusion to *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (written by the Egyptian scribe-god Thoth), which, according to C.G. Jung's 'Psychological Commentary' to the *Tibetan Book of The Dead*, is intended as a guide for the dead man during the intermediary 'Bardho' existence of 49 days (Schaub 1981, p35). Edward Mendelson also notes a possible allusion to a period of time that precedes a grand revelation through the use of the number '49' in the novel's title, mentioning the fact that "Pentecost is the Sunday seven weeks after Easter—forty-nine days", and concluding that, because "the word Pentecost derives from the Greek for 'fiftieth'" the '49' of the novel's title can be interpreted as referring to "the moment before a Pentecost revelation, the end of the period in which the miracle is in a state of potential, not yet manifest" (Mendelson 1978b, p135). This theory is supported by the novel's

blown fuse in the motel has threatened to defer Oedipa's viewing of the movie's ending altogether) and ^{Oedipa's} Oedipa failure to strip herself (L49, p27-28). Later in the novel this strip-act is explicitly connected to Oedipa's search for the Tristero, in a passage that subtly insinuates its protractedly indefinite and eternally deferred character:

So began, for Oedipa, the languid, sinister blooming of The Tristero. Or rather, her attendance at some unique performance, prolonged as if it were the last of the night ... As if the breakaway gowns, net bras, jewelled garters and G-strings of historical figuration that would fall away were layered dense as Oedipa's own street clothes in that game with Metzger ... As if a plunge towards dawn indefinite black hours long would indeed be necessary before the Tristero could be revealed in its terrible nakedness.
(L49, p36)

Most importantly, the Tristero themselves are entirely absent as either a manifest organisation or as a forthcoming key to the seemingly interrelated significances of WASTE, Thurn & Taxis, and the connected underground societies. This is made even more evident by the statement that Oedipa could "recognise signals", discover clues and make connections concerning the Tristero, "but never the central truth itself" (Lot49, p66). As will become clear, the perpetual deferral of revelation of determinate meaning that is part of Pynchon's texts both impels and frustrates the paranoid task (of both the reader of Pynchon's novels and of characters within them) of attempting to interpretatively establish a closed order of significance from the chaos of the text.

* * * * *

The hermeneutic quest for determinate meaning, seen to underlie the superficial surfaces of the textual-world, is common both to the paranoid characters of Pynchon's novels and to the readers of these novels. This presents not only characters who attempt to enforce recognisably paranoid forms and structures over the chaos of the text but also a style of reading and interpretation of the text that is, in a certain sense, paranoid. For an explanation of the particular sense in which this style of interpretation is viewed as being paranoid, one might turn to Edward Jayne's essay, *The Dialectics of Paranoid Form*, that argues that fiction provides the reader with "a paranoid form of experience" which artificially shapes and bounds experience (Jayne 1978, p131). This shaping and bounding of experience is achieved through fiction's presentations of stories that are defined by their insistence upon narrative resolution, characters' solving of problems and discovery of truth, and internal consistency. As Jayne points out: "The clarity of action and accomplishment offered by fiction stands in almost diametrical opposition to the usual confusion and compromises endured by most readers in their personal lives" (Jayne 1978, p134). Broadly speaking, the 'paranoid' quality of fiction lies in the opposition of fiction's form to the innate formlessness of life. According to Jayne, the resolutions and closure of fiction

description of the auctioneer: "Passerine [the auctioneer] spread his arms in a gesture which seemed to

lead to a cathartic release (and simultaneous denial) of anxiety over the existential precariousness of life through the determinacy of narratively structured plot: "form completed, obstacles overcome, and the process of fiction brought from beginning to end as Aristotle maintained: lovers by getting married, detectives by exposing the real culprit, heroes by defeating their enemies, and tragic protagonists by transcending themselves through their own destruction" (Jayne 1978, p132). In this respect, Jayne argues, "fiction remains homologous to paranoia in its objectification of illusion to reduce one's sense of inadequacy. With paranoia the simplistic projection of malevolence justifies one's personal crisis; with fiction story literally 'plots' denial by means of literary accomplishment" (Jayne 1978, p139).

However cogent Jayne's argument may seem to be with regard to traditional forms of narrative fiction, it is certain that his theory does not apply so readily to the fractured, incomplete narrative forms of postmodern fiction. Jayne himself, though he mentions the novels of Thomas Pynchon as denying the paranoid form of traditional narrative fiction, also remarks that Pynchon's "almost total rejection of paranoid form is balanced against an ingenious and obsessive use of paranoid thematic content" (Jayne 1978, p153). Given that Jayne's analysis is based upon a precise metaphorical definition of paranoid *form*, his statement that this can be 'balanced' against thematic *content* seems confused. Form and content, although necessarily interconnected, are by no means synonymous. Pynchon's thematic use of paranoia in order to destabilise and undermine any sort of narrative resolution actually lies in direct opposition to Jayne's figuration of paranoia as the institution of a closed order of resolved meaning. Rather than the cathartic denial of anxiety over instabilities that Jayne insists upon, Pynchon's thematic use of paranoia markedly increases uncertainty in the reader. Jayne's statement that in Pynchon's fiction "[t]here is formal organisation at least to the extent that paranoid expectations have been brought to their resolution as a tentative context of meaning" (Jayne 1978, p153) is therefore patently false. The 'paranoid expectations' that Jayne mentions are the reader's expectations of traditional narrative resolution and the existence of a determinate, closed order of meaning through the rigid institution of dominant plot. The 'context of meaning' in Pynchon's fiction, rather than satisfying these paranoid expectations, actually denies them.¹¹⁹

belong to the priesthood of some remote culture; perhaps to a descending angel" (L49, p127).

¹¹⁹ The postmodern text's resistance to paranoid form is, according to Tony Tanner, primarily due to the desire for freedom from oppressive structures of meaning: "[T]here is an abiding dream in American literature that an unpatterned, unconditioned life is possible, in which your movements and stillnesses, choices and repudiations are all your own; ... there is also an abiding American dread that someone else is patterning your life, that there are all sorts of invisible plots afoot to rob you of your autonomy of thought and action, that conditioning is ubiquitous" (Tanner 1971, p15). This tension between the unpatterned and unconditioned inner freedom and the threat of external control is expressed in the tension between open-ended anti-form and closed, determinate meaning. This issue will be addressed directly at greater length in section four of this thesis, but it suffices to say here that, as much as postmodern

Whilst Jayne rightly concedes that "postmodernist fiction has been ... successfully liberated from paranoid authoritarianism through its elimination of form, sequence and closure" (Jayne 1978, p153), the issues that he raises concerning the paranoid form of traditional fiction (particularly considering the lack of 'paranoid form' in postmodern fictions that often *are* overtly thematically concerned with paranoia) deserve closer attention. It is the postmodern text's denial of paranoid form, its resistance to singular, authoritative interpretation that situates it in a consciously ambivalent position toward paranoia, both attracting paranoid interpretations of meaning and resisting them.¹²⁰ The overflowing excess of consciously disordered information in the postmodern text compels the interpretive act, the reader attempting to discover the 'meaning' of the unruly text. The information that the postmodern novel presents is sorted, interpreted and ordered, but never to a point of finality.¹²¹ The relative openness of the postmodern text, in contrast to

novelists may be shown to desire liberation from the oppressive structures of paranoid form, there is also a need to work within the recognisable structured limits of language and coherent fictional forms. An expression of the necessary tension between the strictures of form and the desire for creatively liberating chaos is given by one of the major postulates of communications theory. As Robert Lilienfield explains, "Communication occurs only insofar as it departs from expectations. But it must not depart too far. The more it departs from predictability, the more original it becomes, but by going too far it becomes incomprehensible" (Lilienfield 1978, p84).

¹²⁰ Numerous summaries of the structure of *Gravity's Rainbow* attest to the 'rage for order' that exists in interpretations of the text, yet is repelled by the text's resistance to rigid form. The 'Structural Analysis' provided by Allen Ruch, for example, presents an obvious antagonism toward the idea that the text is formless (the quality of formlessness seen as being inalterably negative): "Contrary to the opinion of some frustrated readers and a few cranky critics, *Gravity's Rainbow* is not an unstructured work that sprawls chaotically across 800 pages" (Ruch 1997, p1). Attempting to prove the worth of the text, primarily through denying the fact that it is 'chaotic' or 'unstructured', Ruch insists that "certain organisational themes are at work to bring a sense of [structural] cohesion to the book" (Ruch 1997, p2). Ruch's rather strained and eclectic analysis of the 'organisational themes' that he claims "tend towards the religious, the mythopoetic and the occult ... reinforced by recurring textual correspondences to the Christian calendar, the Qabalah, the Tarot, astrology and numerology, and various mythological systems including the Teutonic, the Herero (African), and the Celtic" (Ruch 1997, p2) actually ends up alluding toward yet another assertion of the text's heterogeneous dissolution of totalising structural cohesion. As Ruch states, "the book refuses to dish up that totalising signifier. It approaches, but avoids, closure. It combines the elegance of a preordained structure and the unintelligibility of pure coincidence. In other words, if we demand concrete answers, *Gravity's Rainbow* will, like the old Zen master, cheerfully whack us with a stick" (Ruch 1997, p8). Despite such assertions, Ruch stubbornly attempts to impose little-known esoteric forms of structure, from Aleister Crowley's *The Book of Thoth* to Dion Fortune's *The Mystical Qabalah*, upon *Gravity's Rainbow*. This has little or no actual relevance to readings of the text itself apart from displaying the lengths that people will go to in order to projectively impose structure upon that which precisely resists determinate form. The similar lack of significant impact upon any reading of the text (apart from their providing an extremely useful tool for finding quotes) of other such summaries and form guides of *Gravity's Rainbow* attests to the fact that, although the text impels the interpretative act of imposing structure, this can never be satisfactorily achieved. On this topic, see also Alec McHoul and David Willis's elucidation and criticism of the "exegetical drive" of a large number of literary critics who have addressed Pynchon's works (Willis 1990, p1).

¹²¹ It is obvious that Pynchon determined every word in his novels, and that even intended orders need to be interpreted, but it is Pynchon's texts' consciously determined resistance to singular authoritative interpretations that is at issue here. The 'paranoid' reader seeks singular authoritative interpretations, but

the closure of the 'paranoid form' of the traditionally structured text,¹²² indefinitely denies resolution and closure whilst compelling the interpretive act of forming and shaping the raw data of the text into workable meaning.

Insofar as Oedipa's quest consists of the interpretation of unstable and indeterminate textual referents, it is a reflection of the reader's search for covert significances and hidden meanings within the text itself.¹²³ The enormous number of interpretations of seemingly significant names within the novel attests to an almost unstoppable urge to discover hidden meanings within the text.¹²⁴ Many of these are of relatively minor importance. William Gleason, for example, notes the anagramaticism of the radio station "KCUF", the translingual "K. da Chingado and Company" (Chicano slang for 'What a Fuckup Company'), the humorous "we still need a hundred-and-fourth for the bridge", and the Jacobean plays on "encre", "anchor" and "tryst or odious awry" (Gleason 1993, p6-7). However, many of these 'hidden meanings' seem to contain significant import. The fact that the renegade postal system that links the numerous underground societies within the novel is known by the acronym WASTE, for example, contains an ironically implied denotation of the preterite, underground masses as the 'waste' of society. The word 'Tristero' also assumes significance through its similarity to such words as 'tryst' (meeting or appointment), particularly both its common use in the phrase 'lover's tryst' and through the text's identification of the "pseudo-Italianate ... *triste* (= wretched, depraved)" (L49, p70). This interpretation of veiled meanings is, in *The Crying of Lot 49*, achieved primarily through the predominance of puns. Oedipa herself mentions the "high magic to low puns", in a passage that links saints, clairvoyants, dreamers and (importantly) paranoids, all of whom "act in the same special relevance to the word, or whatever the word is there to protect us from" (L49, p89).¹²⁵ According to Jonathon Culler, puns: "present the

Pynchon's texts authoritatively resist singular interpretation. It might be argued that this is true of any text (see, for example, (Derrida 1981 c1972)) but it is the postmodern text's *conscious* resistance to this notion of interpretative order that is important here. On this topic see particularly (Willis 1990).

¹²² On this subject see also (Hassan 1995, p87-88).

¹²³ A similar situation is consciously highlighted in DeLillo's *Running Dog*, Glen Selvy, the novel's protagonist, is described as being "a reader" (DeLillo 1992, p28). On numerous occasions Selvy is described as 'reading' people and situations with a particular eye to their part in a conspiracy, as is the reader of *Running Dog*. Selvy's role as a reader who imposes fictional forms and symbolic structures upon the chaos of the world is highlighted by his numerous statements such as "I believe in codes" (DeLillo 1992, p33).

¹²⁴ As Alex McHoul and David Willis point out, this "exegetical drive" may also be driven by a variety of peculiarly inadequate presuppositions about authorial intentions: "We can summarise as follows: Pynchon has only been allowed to speak in certain ways and not in others. Our complaint against this is two-fold: not only are the possible ways of speaking thereby limited, they are also, only and always, ways of *speaking* – not of *writing*" (Willis 1990, p4).

¹²⁵ The answer to the question of 'what the word is there to protect us from' is perhaps also answered through the use of pun in the novel. Mucho is related as being haunted by nightmares involving a sign, reading "'National Automobile Dealer's Association. NADA'" at the car-lot where he worked: "'Just this creaking metal sign that said nada, nada, against the blue sky. I used to wake up hollering'" (L49,

disquieting spectacle of a functioning of language where boundaries—between sounds, between sound and letter, between meanings—count for less than one might imagine" (Culler 1988, p3). In *Shakespearean Meanings*, Sigurd Bruckhardt writes of puns as shattering the "pre-established harmony between [words] and the things they designate" (Bruckhardt 1968, p25):

The pun is ... the creation of a semantic identity between words whose phonetic identity is, for ordinary language, the merest coincidence. This is to say, it is an act of verbal violence, designed to tear the close bond between a word and its meaning.... The pun gives the word as an entity primacy over the word as sign. In doing so it gives the lie to the social convention that is language. (Bruckhardt 1968, p24-25)

According to Bruckhardt, the pun: "denies the very meaningfulness of words and so calls into question the genuineness of the linguistic currency on which the social order depends. It makes us aware that words may be counterfeits" (Bruckhardt 1968, p25). The prevalence of puns in *The Crying of Lot 49* functions as a disturbance of the boundaries between Oedipa and the reader, both on a quest for secret meaning beneath the immediate surface of the text. However, as well as giving Oedipa and the reader clues to the 'hidden meaning' of the text, puns actually multiply meanings and increase textual indeterminacy.¹²⁶ Thus the desire of both Oedipa and the reader for the singularity of covert meaning beneath the surface of text is frustrated precisely by that which facilitates it. In such a fashion, puns also aid in the slippage of meaning beneath signifiers. In *The Crying of Lot 49* this is consciously asserted when Oedipa asks Jesús Arrabel (the word Jesus itself is played upon in the text): "[h]ow is your CIA? Standing not for the agency you think, but for a clandestine Mexican outfit known as the *Conjuración de los Insurgentes Anarquistas* ... briefly allied with Zapata" (L49, p82). In this passage the acronym 'CIA', normally used to refer to those American masters of secrecy the 'Central Intelligence Agency', is subverted through ironic inversion to refer to a revolutionary group that is in direct ideological opposition to the Central Intelligence Agency. Likewise, the puns inherent in many characters' names supply an ironic inversion of gender. Male characters' names such as 'Fallopian', 'Koteks', and 'Emory Bortz' allude to feminine bodily organs and hygiene products. The classical allusion through the use of the name 'Oedipa' (a feminisation of 'Oedipus') and the fact that at one point in the novel Oedipa becomes known as "Arnold Snarb" (through being given a namebadge in a nightclub (L49, p76)) subverts the linguistic context of Oedipa's gender. That Oedipa is later named 'Edna Mosh'

p100). Through the pun on 'nada', the Spanish word for 'nothing', it is implied that the word is there to protect us from the chaotic nothingness of the extra-linguistic world.

¹²⁶ As Derek Attridge writes, "In place of a context designed to suppress latent ambiguity, the pun is the product of a contest deliberately constructed to enforce an ambiguity, to render impossible the choice between meanings, to leave the reader or hearer endlessly oscillating in semantic space" (Attridge 1988, p141).

(when she is interviewed her Disc Jockey husband Mucho Maas¹²⁷ who is "'allowing for the distortion on the rigs, and when they put it on tape'" (L49, p96)), and is identified on different occasions as "Margo" (Inverarity's sidekick when he speaks in the pastiche "Lamont Cranston voice" (L49, p6)); "a nymph" (at Echo Courts (L49, p16)); "Rapunzel" (metaphorically figured as a captive maiden trapped in a tower (L49, p12)); and "Grace Bortz" (when she thinks that she is pregnant (L49, p118)) reinforces the indeterminacy of meaning beneath signs and signals, in this case the meaning of identity.

* * * * *

Given the number of interpretations of the supposed hidden meanings underlying the names of Pynchon's characters, one might well think that coincidence has played a strong part in many of these extracted meanings. However, it is precisely through coincidental affinities or accidental similarities that puns operate. This is shown to be the case in the much-cited **Maxwell's Demon** episode of *The Crying of Lot 49*. John Nefastis's Maxwell's Demon machine gains its conceptual foundation through the linguistic coincidence of the term 'entropy' in two distinct disciplinary areas: "For John Nefastis ... two kinds of entropy, thermodynamic and informational, happened, say by coincidence, to look alike, when you wrote them down as equations. Yet he had made his mere coincidences respectable, with the help of Maxwell's Demon" (L49, p75). It is Oedipa's paranoid interpretations of such linguistic coincidences surrounding the Tristero that forms the basis of her quest: "Now here was Oedipa, faced with a metaphor of God knew how many parts; more than two, anyway. With coincidences blossoming these days, wherever she looked, she had nothing but a sound, a word, Trysterio, to hold them together" (L49, p75). Characters' desires to link and hold together the coincidences that occur to them in such a way is shown by the novel to constitute a paranoid style of thought. For the paranoid, convinced of the fact that the interrelations of the world ultimately refer to a conspiratorial agency, there is no such thing as coincidence.¹²⁸ This search for conspiratorial design behind the operations of chance is a phenomenon that is noted in psychoanalytical literature. Peter Chadwick, for example, remarks that paranoiacs "search for the causes of all the coincidences that happen to them—constructing a pseudocommunity to 'explain' them" (Chadwick 1992, p91). His statement could easily be extended to apply to Oedipa's obsession with the Tristero, or to Herbert Stencil's reaction to certain coincidental occurrences in *V*. At one point in *V*, the reader learns that Stencil was shot in Father Fairing's parish in the New York sewers where he was searching for clues concerning the elusive V in a waterproof

¹²⁷ This name itself contains an ironic play on the fact that Mucho is by no means macho. He is described by Oedipa as being "'too sensitive'" about his profession as a used car salesman: "[T]here was your Mucho: thin skinned" (L49, p7).

¹²⁸ When a character in Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* encounters "A universe sufficiently surreal to plunge me again into paranoia", for example, he asserts, "Nothing is accidental" (Eco 1990 c1988, p612).

suit and diving mask, (V, p131) an apparatus that made him look so strange that Benny Profane mistook him for an alligator and shot him (V, p122-123). This coincidental meeting of Profane and Stencil so unnerves Stencil that he declares that Profane "has a soul possessed by the devil", and is convinced that Profane is in league with V as part of a conspiratorial plot directed against him (V, p450).

This sort of paranoid interpretive conjoining of coincidental circumstances is subjected to critique in the 'Mondaugen's Story' section in *V.*, in which the random "atmospheric radio disturbances" (attributed to sunspots or lightning (V, p230)) that Kurt Mondaugen is investigating are construed by the paranoid Weissman as being a secret, coded transmission. According to Weissman, the deciphered 'message' spells out Kurt Mondaugen's name and the famous line from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated into English by Mondaugen as: "'The world is all that the case is'" (V, p278). Apart from itself mentioning the power of accident,¹²⁹ the *Tractatus* explicitly defines its aim as setting a limit to certain forms of speculative thought, such as Weissman exhibits. As the preface to the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* states:

The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking, or rather—not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to be able to set a limit to thought, we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought). The limit can, therefore, only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side of the limit will be simply nonsense. (Wittgenstein 1960 c1921, p27)

As this episode shows: "Delusional systems are not entirely intrapsychic constructions; they depend also on thousands of events and happenings 'out there' in the world which are totally beyond the psychotic's control or expectation" (Chadwick 1992, p137). However, one might interpret the end of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*—"Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (Wittgenstein 1960 c1921, p189)—as pointing to the fact that it is precisely those things 'out there' that we ultimately cannot speak about. Yet the major activity of the paranoiac is the furious production of flurried discourses, linking surface coincidences into a conspiratorial matrix centred about the underlying, hidden cause of an ultimate, malevolent agency.

In his essay *The Postmodern Labyrinths of 'Lot 49'*, William Gleason suggests that Pynchon himself articulates a world in which everything is connected yet, importantly, uncentred (Gleason 1993).¹³⁰ The idea of the interconnectedness of all things also arises in DeLillo's

¹²⁹ "For all that happens and is the case is accidental.... What makes it non-accidental cannot lie within the world, since if it did it would itself be accidental" (Wittgenstein 1960 c1921, p183).

¹³⁰ The idea that Pynchon's fictional worlds are without centre is supported by previous analyses. As well as the previous analysis of continually deferred revelation in *The Crying of Lot 49*, one might note the statement that Oedipa could divine clues and connections about the Tristero "but never the central truth itself" (L49, p66). The deferral of determinate, centred meaning through the use of puns has been previously discussed, as has the play on centre and margin in the novel (evident in the fact that Oedipa is

references to systems theory. As a character remarks in DeLillo's *Running Dog*: "Systems. It's one of the areas we [Americans] still excel in" (DeLillo 1992, p90). In *Running Dog*, the first victim of a conspiracy is identified as being a systems engineer, providing a connection between systems of connection and conspiracies (DeLillo 1992, p43). Numerous statements made by characters highlight the association with conspiracy of the systems theory type of view of interconnection:

'Conspiracy's our theme ... Connections, links, secret associations.'
(DeLillo 1992, p59)

'I have links inside links. This is the age of conspiracy ... This is the age of connections, links, secret relationships.'
(DeLillo 1992, p111)

In *Underworld* this association with the idea of the interconnection of everything with conspiracy is repeated. One character, a systems engineer, alludes to the confused suspicion caused by a view of the world as an interconnection of forces: "Everything connected at some undisclosed point down the systems line. This caused a certain select disquiet" (DeLillo 1997, p408). In *Underworld* the intuition that everything is connected yet without centre leads to a kind of relativistic belief in anything. As one character comments on the conspiratorial rumours surrounding a tanker that is reputed to have never offloaded its cargo:

'A ship carrying thousands of barrels of industrial waste. Or is it CIA heroin? I can believe this myself. You know why? Because it's easy to believe. We'd be stupid not to believe it. Knowing what we know.... That everything's connected.'
(DeLillo 1997, p289)

Similarly, in Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*, Mason often muses upon the possibility of conspiracies, questioning whether "perhaps [sic] these Occurrences, — ... as others, are invisibly connected" (Pynchon 1997, p429). A character in Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* comments upon the hermeneutic element of this perceived conspiratorial interconnection:

'Any fact becomes important when it's connected to another. The connection changes the perspective; it leads you to think that every detail of the world, every voice, every word spoken has more than its literal meaning, that it tells us of a Secret. The rule is simple: Suspect, only suspect. You can read subtexts even in a traffic sign that says "No littering".'
(Eco 1990 c1988, p377-378)

A prime example of characters seeking conspiratorial subtextual connections is provided by *Foucault's Pendulum*, when what is identified by one character as a laundry list is interpreted by another as a secret communication between conspirators (Eco 1990 c1988,

searching for the centre of meaning of a group that has come to represent the marginal and displaced of America). A similar centrality of the marginal is present in DeLillo's *Underworld*, particularly in one character's affirmation that the disposable marginality of waste is actually the central point of civilisation (DeLillo 1997, p287).

p534). This ^{type} sort of uncertainty that exists with regard to the indeterminate identity of the laundry list/conspiratorial communication is inherent in the interconnectional view of systems theory. A character in *Underworld* explains this epistemological uncertainty as being a result of the incomprehensibility of the total system from the perspective of any one person:

And how can you tell the difference between orange juice and agent orange if the same massive system connects them at levels outside your comprehension? And how can you tell if this is true when you're already systemed under, prepared to half believe everything because this is the only intelligent response.
(DeLillo 1997, p465)

The idea of the connection of everything is similarly left ambivalently indeterminate in Pynchon's works. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, the WASTE system does connect all the underground groups,¹³¹ but these are by no means homologous, consisting of groups that know nothing of each other's existence and have little in common apart from their marginality. They are linked, paradoxically, through their fragmented and disparate isolation.¹³² This sort of marginality is also common in *Gravity's Rainbow*. As Tom LeClair writes: "Almost all of the major characters of *Gravity's Rainbow* are aliens, temporary residents of a country not their own.... Even the German characters, ... are displaced in the Zone that is partitioned postwar Germany" (LeClair 1989, p39). Thus the central characters of *Gravity's Rainbow* are all, in a sense, marginal. Similarly, the central protagonists of *Mason & Dixon*, Mason and Dixon, feel themselves to be nothing but "Bystanders, Background. Stage-Managers of that perilous Flux, —little more" (Pynchon 1997, p545).¹³³ One of the marginalised groups that Oedipa encounters in *The Crying of Lot 49* is a group of deaf-mutes whom she finds herself dancing with, in a passage that interrogates the notion of a complex order arising out of apparent chaos:

There would have to be collisions. The only alternative was some unthinkable order of music, many rhythms, all keys at once, a choreography in which each couple meshed easily, predestined. Something they all heard with an extra sense atrophied in herself.
(L49, p90-91)

In such a contiguity of distinct forms of rhythmic order, there is a disquieting harmony, potentially isomorphically representative of a larger cosmic order constituted through the interaction of disparate forces. Thus Pynchon does not so much propose a homologous connectivity of all things, but presents a scene of fragmentation and plurality that

¹³¹ See particularly (L49, p86).

¹³² One of the underground groups that Oedipa learns of is "Inamorati Anonymous", consisting of people who help each other kick their addiction to love. Due to the inherent risks involved in personal contact the members of the group never meet, and are not even allowed to learn each others' names, contact occurring only via an impersonal answering service (L49, p77-78). The group thus maintains its identity and unity, paradoxically, through enforcing total isolation upon each of its members.

¹³³ This idea of the decentralisation of the previously marginal is further invoked in this passage by Dixon's consideration of the situation being "no worse than Copernicus ... The Centre of it all, moving someplace else" (Pynchon 1997, p545).

constitutes the very multiplicity of the whole. As Molly Hite writes: "[Pynchon's] own fictional worlds ... are pluralistic—governed not by a rigid, absolute, and universal Idea of Order but by multiple, partially overlapping, and often conflicting ideas of order" (Hite 1983, p10). However, even in the case of such a pluralistic 'systems theory' view of the interconnectedness of all things, it must be said that nothing, except everything, explains anything. Pynchon's texts themselves attest to this fact. *Gravity's Rainbow*, for example, describes a character's decision to commit suicide only after renouncing the things of the world, a renunciation listed in the song 'Sold on Suicide':

In its complete version it represents a pretty fair renunciation of the things of the world. The trouble with it is that by Gödel's Theorem there is bound to be some item around that one has omitted from the list, and such an item is not easy to think of off the top of one's head, so that what one does most likely is go back over the whole thing, meantime correcting mistakes and inevitable repetitions, and putting in new items that will surely have occurred to one, and—well, it's easy to see that the 'suicide' of the title might have to be postponed indefinitely!
(GR, p320)

This passage not only implies the eternal deferral of ultimate significance to the point that denouement seems an impossibility, but also illustrates that no one person can ever understand the infinite factors that collectively constitute the form and bearing of the external world. Articulating the same point in a less scientific vein, Stencil the elder's journal in *V.* poses the rhetorical question: "Short of examining the entire history of each individual participating ... short of anatomising each soul, what hope has anyone of understanding a Situation?" (*V.*, p470). As he writes earlier, any 'Situation' is simply too complex to be understood by any one observer:

He had decided long ago that no Situation had any objective reality: it only existed in the minds of those who happened to be in on it at any specific moment. Since these several minds tended to form a sum total or complex more mongrel than homogenous, the Situation must necessarily appear to a single observer much like a diagram in four dimensions to an eye conditioned to seeing its world in only three.
(*V.*, p189)

Needless to say, even in DeLillo's fiction the notion of human projection of order over the operations of chaos still finds a certain predominance, characters expressing the need for structured meaning as a defence against the chaos of the world. In *Underworld*, for example, the garbologist Detwiler explains his theory that civilisation has developed in response to the build-up of garbage, the detritus and waste of the world that continually threatens to disturb and displace any established order:

[Garbage] pushed into every space available, dictating construction patterns and altering systems of ritual. And it produced rats and *paranoia*. People were compelled to develop an organised response.... garbage rose first, inciting people to build a civilisation in response, in self-defence.... And it forced us to develop the logic and rigor that would lead to systematic investigations of reality, to science, art, music, mathematics.
(DeLillo 1997, p287—my emphasis)

The precedence of incomprehensible chaos (whether chaos is figured as total disorder or as a complex order that exceeds the human capacity to recognise it as ordered) over the constructed order of mankind is asserted in this passage, as it is in the works of Thomas Pynchon. At one point in *The Crying of Lot 49*, for example, Oedipa's consideration of the possibility of discovering the rationale behind the apparently random flight path of a punctured can of hair-spray presents the reader with the idea that, although there may be an order behind what appears to the observer as aimlessness, such an order must be too complex for any one person to understand: "The can knew where it was going, she sensed, or something fast enough, God or a digital machine, might have computed in advance the complex web of its travel; but she wasn't fast enough" (L49, p24). The can ceases its flight by smashing into a mirror, articulating the idea that any notion of order is in itself a projection of internally constructed meaning, the can in question concluding its gesture by demonstratively destroying that which presents such a reflection of oneself in the outside world. Pynchon thus seems less to propose the unitary connection of everything in the world than he does the notion that any theorisation of the world is a hypothetical construction that is necessarily fictive. Given that this analysis has turned to scientific theories, one might note Mark Siegel's statement that:

[Pynchon] invests the physical sciences with no more authority than he does the literary and mythological systems that he uses in a tentative manner. The narrator [of *Gravity's Rainbow*] sees science itself as composed of metaphorical conceptions of universal forces, and sees metaphorical structures in science, the arts, religion, and even casual figures of speech as all valid but tentative ways of imagining, investigating, and testing the structures of reality. (Siegel 1978, p73-74)

Whether or not Thomas Schaub is correct in his statement that Pynchon intends "to mirror in his fiction a world Situation in which accident is not separate from design but is the passive result of many designs operating at cross-purposes to each other" (Schaub 1981, p8), it is in a state of constant tension between the contradictory feelings of unitary design and fragmented coincidence that the characters in Pynchon's novels are forced to live.

In Pynchon's works, it is the impossibility of extracting homogenous meaning out of what are presented as being heterogeneous situations that leads to the tension between the perceived dichotomies of connected design and fragmented chance, corresponding to the mental states of paranoia and anti-paranoia respectively. According to Edward Mendehlson, in postmodern literature "the connectedness of the world has its metonym in paranoia" (*Gravity's Encyclopaedia*, p169). While this idea is supported by an oft-cited passage in *Gravity's Rainbow* that describes paranoia as "nothing less than the onset, the leading edge, of the discovery that *everything is connected*, everything in the Creation, a secondary illumination—not yet blindingly One, but at least connected" (GR, p703) the novel itself stops short of wholeheartedly affirming this belief. Rather (as was

demonstrated above), in Pynchon's works, this belief is explored and interrogated. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, the paranoid interpretation of coincidences (or "Kute Korrespondances" as they are referred to at one point (GR, p590)) as conspiratorially directed by unseen, malevolent forces is opposed to the notion of 'anti-paranoia', the interpretation of every event and happening as the consequence of pure chance and coincidence: "If there is something comforting, religious, if you want—about paranoia, there is still also anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long" (GR, p434). Intimately related to the modes of cognition of paranoia and anti-paranoia is the question, posed neatly by Tony Tanner, that is raised by many of Pynchon's novels: "Are we surrounded by plots—social, natural, cosmic; or is there no plot, no hidden configuration of intent, only gratuitous matter and chance?" (Tanner 1982, p42). Pynchon's fiction makes it obvious that an anti-paranoiac vision of the world as "gratuitous matter and chance" is an unliveable situation. As Fausto Majjstral states in *V*: "life's single lesson [is]: that there is more accident to it than a man can ever admit to in a lifetime and stay sane" (*V*, p320-321). Paranoid interpretations of conspiratorial order provide a way of fending off chaos and, paradoxically, of remaining sane. *The Crying of Lot 49*, for example, refers to: "a paranoia more protective than psychotic" (*L49*, p41). It is against the seeming chaos of the postmodern world that Pynchon's characters develop a paranoid style of organising their vision of the world, perceiving conspiracies in every event and action as an act of projecting meaning and operation upon the operations of chance and coincidence that surround them.

This notion of paranoia as a defensive process of ordering a chaotic environment has an analogue in psychiatric literature. According to Swanson, Bohnert, and Smith's monograph on paranoia, the paranoiac is beset by "bewildering perceptions", and in order to restore a sense of stability and equilibrium constructs a conspiratorial explanation that attributes this confusion to an external, rather than internal, source. With the cause of disequilibrium identified, according to the authors, bewilderment is abolished and uncertainty reduced (Swanson 1970). In this sort of theorisation, paranoia is not viewed as a first-order 'disease' but is identified as a mode of processing secondary to a primary disturbance. The importance of paranoia in Pynchon's novels equally lies in their presentation of characters' defensive paranoid reactions towards the loss of stable, determinate meaning. Paranoia is not portrayed as being a primary dysfunction within the individual, but, as *Gravity's Rainbow*'s fifth 'Proverb for paranoids' shows, it occurs in response to unnerving situations: "Paranoids are not paranoids ... because they're paranoid, but because they keep putting themselves, fucking idiots, deliberately into paranoid situations" (GR, p292). Paranoid interpretations of the chaotic operations of chance and coincidence are shown to be a means of mentally ordering and structuring the unordered and unstructured world. As one character in *Gravity's Rainbow* remarks: "'We are obsessed with building labyrinths, where before there was open plain and sky. To draw ever more

complex patterns on the blank sheet. We cannot abide that openness; it is terror to us" (GR, p264). A similar process is presented in *Mason & Dixon*, Dixon explaining the motivating factor behind his decision to become a surveyor as being his fear of the open countryside. Surveying, he says "'provided me an incentive, to enclose that which had hitherto been without Form, and hence haunted by anything and ev'rything, if you grasp my meaning,— anything and ev'rything, Sir'" (Pynchon 1997, p504). In *The Crying of Lot 49*, this defensive reaction is presented as a mental process of filling the void (of the unstructured, chaotic world) via Oedipa's encountering a Remedios Varo painting, showing a girl in a tower (with whom Oedipa identifies) "embroidering a kind of tapestry which spilled out the slit windows and into a void: seeking hopelessly to fill the void: for all the other buildings and creatures, all the waves, ships and forests of the earth were contained in this tapestry, and the tapestry was the world" (L49, p13).

The paranoid misinterpretation of coincidences as being directed by some form of conspiratorial agency is shown to operate on both small and large scales. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, when Oedipa is confronted with a situation that is little more than slightly unusual (the chance screening of a movie featuring the child-actor Metzger who had just arrived at Oedipa's motel in his capacity as lawyer), her thoughts immediately turn to a consideration of conspiratorial possibilities: "Either he [Metzger] made up the whole thing, Oedipa thought suddenly, or he bribed the engineer over at the local station to run this, it's all part of a plot, an elaborate, seduction, *plot*" (L49, p19). On a larger scale, it is during the same scene that Oedipa's suspicions about a larger plot (concerning Pierce's will and the Tristero) are subtly widened, owing to the unusual proliferation of advertisements for Pierce Inverarity's business interests in San Narciso. In V., Stencil's obsessive search for V. leads him to see the letter 'V' ("The magic initial!" (V, p228)) everywhere, and to interpret V. as being the motive force behind almost every operation of chance and coincidence. Just as the reader follows Oedipa in her search for the Tristero, the reader is drawn into Stencil's V obsession, noting that the letter 'V' is present in the V-note jazz club, the sewer rat Veronica, Vheissu, Venezuela, Venus, Vatican, Vesuvius, Queen Victoria, the Hotel Victoria, Valetta, the image of spread thighs (V, p61), streets "receding in an asymmetric V to the east" (V, p10), the V-shaped stain on a plate (V, p90), and more. In almost the same vein of obsession, Tony Tanner has meticulously traced Stencil's quest for V and assembled the following biography: V, born in 1880, appears as Victoria Wren in Cairo 1898 and Florence 1899, in Paris 1913 as 'V' in a fetishistic lesbian relationship, as Victoria Manganese in Malta 1919, as Vera Meroving in Foppl's siege party in Southwest Africa in 1922 (which recreates the 1904 period of Von Trotha), and is finally 'disassembled' in Malta during WWII in incarnation as 'the Bad Priest' (Tanner 1982, p44). The novel itself subtly mocks this type of search through references to the "grand Gothic pile of inferences [Stencil] was hard at work creating" (V, p226) and to the fact that Stencil "feeds on mystery" (V, p386). As Eigenvalue reflects:

Cavities in the teeth occur for good reason, ... But even if there are several per tooth, there's no conscious organisation there against the life of the pulp, no conspiracy. Yet we have such men as Stencil, who must go about grouping the world's random caries into cabals.
(V, p153)

Stencil the elder, in a similar vein, advises Stencil the younger:

Don't act as if it were a conscious plot against you. Who knows how many thousand accidents—a variation in the weather, the availability of a ship, the failure of a crop—brought all these people, with their separate dreams and worries, here to this island and arranged them into this alignment? Any Situation takes shape from events much lower than the merely human.
(V, p483)

However, Stencil does not give up his search for V or his assumption that V is that which secretly underlies the supposed coincidences and accidents that occur to him. Despite his eventual realisation that "V. ... was a remarkably scattered concept" (V, p389) and "[t]hat it did add up only to the recurrence of an initial and a few dead objects" (V, p445), he steadfastly refuses to give up his quest. He persists in viewing coincidences and chance occurrences as caused by V, despite the realisation that there is little, if anything, to justify his belief that "his quarry fitted in with the Big One, the century's master cabal ... the ultimate Plot Which Has No Name" (V, p226). As one character remarks of the random accidents and indiscriminate acts of nature that constitute the world: "Crosscurrents, seismic movements, unknown things in the night. But you can't help thinking it's somebody's fault" (V, p434).

As is shown by Stencil's interpretation of coincidences and accidents as relating to V, the desire to regain a coherent, internally consistent vision of the world finds perfect expression in the overabundance of evidence presented by the conspiracy theories of the paranoid. According to historian Richard Hofstadter's essay 'The Paranoid Style in American Politics', these theories are nothing if not coherent: "in fact, the paranoid mentality is far more coherent ^{than} ~~that~~ the real world, since it leaves no room for mistakes, failures, or ambiguities" (Hofstadter 1965a, p36).¹³⁴ What is spurious in the paranoid

¹³⁴ As G.K. Chesterton writes, "If you argue with a madman it is extremely probable that you will get the worst of it; for in many ways his mind moves all the quicker for not being delayed by the things that go with good judgement. He is not hampered by a sense of humour or by charity, or by the dumb certainties of experience. He is the more logical for losing sane affections. Indeed, the common phrase for insanity *is* in this respect a misleading one. The madman is not the man who has lost his reason. The madman is the man who has lost everything else" (Chesterton 1927, p165). Further on this issue, one might turn to Chadwick's description of the 'confirmation bias' of the paranoid (citing Wason 1960; Wason and Johnson-Laird 1968; Mynat et al 1977; Tweney et al 1981): "This is the bias to select and accept data that *confirms* one's ideas and hypotheses at the expense of data that refute them", wryly adding that this is "obviously a very common and pervasive phenomenon!" (Chadwick 1992, p1). To this is added the numerous descriptions of the spurious integrative thought processes of the paranoid, Chadwick citing the 'false connection' of Koffka (1935), and Nisbett and Ross (1980), and the 'magical thinking' of Johnson-Laird and Wason (1977) (Chadwick 1992, p46). A similar position is articulated by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*: "There is an intellectual function in us that demands unity, connection

interpretation of events, according to Hofstadter, is the "curious leap in imagination" that links them all together into a conspiratorial matrix (Hofstadter 1965a, p37). In Pynchon's fiction, this is shown to be a process of recentralisation to fill the void left by the decentering of the postmodern world, phenomena grouped around an *idée fixe* in an all-embracing conspiratorial order; an example of what Thomas Schaub describes as "the tyrannising desire of the mind for unity and meaning" (Schaub 1981, pix).

The phenomenon of paranoid projection, whereby the inner mindscape is projected upon the outer world, is a feature common to all acts of paranoid interpretation. As has been demonstrated above, in Pynchon's works the paranoiac orders his or her world according to his or her preoccupations, obsessions, and fixations.¹³⁵ Such a process is evident with regard to Stencil's V, Oedipa's Tristero, Slothrop's rocket, and so on. At the beginning of this section, I noted that one of the major differences between the novels of DeLillo and Pynchon is the latter's investigation of individual acts of paranoid projection, whereas DeLillo is more overtly concerned with the collective act of constructing meaning. However, through their expositions of the fictive nature of lived reality, both serve to show how paranoia is on a continuum with all mental constructions of reality.

and intelligibility from any material, whether of perception or thought, that comes within its grasp; and if, as a result of special circumstances, it is unable to establish a true connection, it does not hesitate to fabricate a false one.... The construction of systems is seen most strikingly in delusional disorders (in paranoia), where it dominates the symptomatic picture" (Freud 1955 c1913, p95). These descriptions of the false connections of the paranoiac are also similar to the Enlightenment theory of mental illness as systematic error. Such is presented in Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, in which Rasselas meets an astronomer who thinks he can command clouds to rain, has tested this theory and by sheer accident unjustly confirmed it (Johnson 1971 c1759, p109-112). As John Locke writes in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, "*mad Men* ... do not appear to me to have lost the Faculty of Reasoning; but having joined together some *Ideas* very wrongly, they mistake them for Truths; and they err as Men do, that argue from wrong Principles.... In short, herein seems to lie the difference between Idiots and *mad Men*, That *mad Men* put wrong *Ideas* together, and so make wrong Propositions, but argue and reason right from them: But Idiots make very few or no Propositions, and reason scarce at all" (Locke 1975 c1690, p161). Jung similarly describes schizophrenia (the state preliminary to full-blown paranoid schizophrenia) as "a disturbance of the normal synthesis of ideas" (Jung 1960 c1957, p252). According to Yehuda and Fried, the paranoiac is thus "like a bad scientist who, instead of waiting for the facts to lead him to a theory, dares invent one and test it empirically" (Fried 1976, p31). The paranoiac will not give up his conspiracy theory simply because one or two small facts seem to contradict it. Rather there seems to him or her to be reason to look for the cause of contradiction in the form of demonic disinformation.

¹³⁵ Rem Koolhaas's *Delirious New York* describes the paranoiac's tendency to interpret a variety of phenomena as related to his or her subjectively defined *idée fixe* thus: "Just as in a magnetic field metal molecules align themselves to exert a collective, unconscious pull, so, through unstoppable, systematic and in themselves strictly rational associations, the paranoiac turns the whole world into a magnetic field of facts, all pointing in the same direction: the one he is going in" (Koolhaas 1994, p238). As Koolhaas puts it, "the paranoiac always hits the nail on the head, no matter where the hammer falls"

On the subject of paranoid projection, R.D. Laing writes that there are "amazing collective paranoid projective systems that operate on large scales. We attribute to them exactly what we are doing to them. Because we are seeing ourselves in them, but we do not know that we are. We think that they are them, but they are actually us" (cited in (Kirsner 1976, p147-148)). Laing's cryptic affirmation that acts of paranoid projection (both collective and individual) involve an unrealised projection of the self onto the outer world, although obviously influenced by the existentialist philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre, also has roots in Freud's seminal analysis of paranoia. Freud interpreted paranoid delusions of persecution as being the result of projections of unconscious homosexual desires. According to Freud's analysis: "the paranoid patient denies his homosexual feelings, projecting them on to someone else and then doubly reversing them, thereby transforming and disguising the homosexual impulse into the delusion that he was hated, i.e. he denied that he loved the male X, but asserted instead that X hated him" (Rycroft 1977 c1968, p126).¹³⁶ Freud's hypothesis that paranoia arises as the result of repressed, unconscious homosexual desires is present, albeit in a somewhat bastardised form, in Norman Mailer's novels *Oswald's Tale* and *The Executioner's Song*. These novels have as their respective protagonists Lee Harvey Oswald (the infamous assassin of John F. Kennedy) and Gary Gilmore (the first man to suffer state execution in America in more than ten years and the subject of a major media circus, due to the fact that this execution was carried out only due to his own insistence), characters surrounded by conspiratorial circumstances and paranoid speculation. In Mailer's treatment of both characters, repressed homosexuality or intolerable sexual deviance are somewhat ambiguously (and ambivalently) implied. In *Oswald's Tale*, Mailer explores the possibility of Oswald's being a repressed homosexual; repressed, according to Mailer, owing to contemporary attitudes toward homosexuality:

... his young life is a study in one recurring theme—I am not a man and I must become one—which in the late Fifties and early Sixties became a compelling motif for many young men terrified by homosexual inclinations and ready to go to great lengths to combat and/or conceal them.... given the oppressive psychological climate of the Fifties, we have to entertain the possibility that one of the major obsessions in Oswald's life was manhood, attaining his manhood. If he was in part homosexual, then the force of such a preoccupation would have doubled and trebled.
(Mailer 1995, p379)

As evidence for this hypothesis Mailer presents a detailed examination of the rumours and conjectures of persons who knew Oswald only briefly (two Marines who had trained with Oswald give their opinion that Oswald was homosexual¹³⁷) and an entirely spurious, independent interpretation of an event not even shown to be explicitly connected to Oswald. The death of a Marine on a ship on which Oswald was training, officially ruled 'accidental', is considered by Mailer (without corroborating evidence) thus: "An undeclared

(Koolhaas 1994, p238). Quantum scientist Michael Fortun relates this notion as the process by which "when you look at something, you create what you're studying" (Fortun 1999, p90).

¹³⁶ See (Freud 1995 c1896, p94-95) for Freud's early development of this idea.

possibility is that someone [by implication, Lee Harvey Oswald] was being forced to kneel and commit fellatio and so was in position to pick up the shotgun from where it had been placed on the ground at his feet" (Mailer 1995, p385). From this rather scant array of evidence, Mailer (rather forcibly, considering the circumstances) presents the possibility that Oswald's assassination of JFK was the result of repressed homosexual impulses. Towards the end of *Oswald's Tale* Mailer states that "[t]he murderer kills in order to cure himself" (Mailer 1995, p781). The question as to what it is to cure himself of that the murderer kills for is not answered directly by Mailer. The most likely answer, considering the context of *Oswald's Tale*, would seem to be 'of an inner rage' stemming from personal abhorrence of sexual deviance. A similar conclusion is reached in Mailer's portrait of Gary Gilmore presented in *The Executioner's Song*, Mailer alluding to the possibility of Gilmore's having paedophilic tendencies and of being the victim of male rape while at a juvenile correctional institute (both conjectures similarly unsubstantiated) (Mailer 1991 c1979).

Whereas the novels of Norman Mailer and the psychoanalysis of Freud emphasise the sexual constituents of paranoia,¹³⁸ apart from the minor episode of fetishism in *V.* and the general, less sexualised theme of narcissism within *The Crying of Lot 49* (both to be addressed presently), overt sexual drives have little to do with paranoia in Pynchon's fiction. Psychiatrist Anthony Storr defines projection slightly more broadly than Freud as "that curious, ubiquitous mechanism by which human beings disown what is unacceptable in themselves and attribute it wrongly to someone else" (Storr 1972, p80). Within Pynchon's works the paranoiac does not project sub- or unconscious anger outward in this manner but, comparably, shifts his or her perception of power and control from an internal to an external source. Whilst this weakens the notion of the pathological externalisation of unacceptable personal qualities, Storr's continued comments on projection, in particular his statement that the paranoiac has "the sense that he is at the mercy of figures who are much more powerful than himself" (Storr 1972, p81) are extremely pertinent with regard to the examples of paranoid projection presented by Pynchon. The notion of paranoid projection proposed by Pynchon has much in common with Jungian notions of projection: "'All unconscious contents,' Jungians say, are 'first experienced in projection.' That is, 'an unconscious quality of one's own is first recognised and reached to when it is discovered in an outer object'".¹³⁹ Pynchon's demonstration that paranoid processes are on a continuum with all mental functioning, that paranoid mechanisms are utilised by all of us in our interpretations of our environments, involves the notion of the projection of one's inner

¹³⁷ See particularly (Mailer 1995, p379-380).

¹³⁸ Here one might also mention Peter Chadwick's statement that, "Psychoanalytic investigations [into paranoia] suggest a borderline narcissistic or outrightly psychotic level of personality functioning in sexual variants of gender disturbed and/or fetishistic orientation (e.g. Bak 1953; Lewis 1963; Ovesey and Person 1978; Payne 1939)" (Chadwick 1992, p57).

mindscape upon the outer objects of the world. This idea of projection is utilised by Pynchon particularly in *The Crying of Lot 49* and *V*. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa writes in her notebook underneath a WASTE horn symbol: "*Shall I project a world?*" and muses: "If not project than at least flash some arrow on the dome to skitter among constellations and trace out your Dragon, Whale, Southern Cross. Anything might help" (L49, p56). This statement, referring to the acts of paranoid interpretation by which the external world is internally viewed as ordered and structured, through a kind of 'join-the-dots' extraction and projection of coherent form, also alludes to Randolph Dribblette's statement that the play *The Courier's Tragedy* exists only in his head: "I'm the projector at the planetarium, all the closed little universe visible in the circle of that stage is coming out of my mouth, eyes, sometimes other orifices also" (L49, p54). Further alluding to the idea that the world of individual experience is, to a large extent, a solipsistic creation of meaning is Oedipa's belief that in organising Pierce's estate (figured as America itself (L49, p123)) it was her duty "to try to be what Dribblette was, the dark machine in the centre of the planetarium, to bring the estate into pulsing stelliferous Meaning, all in a soaring dome around her" (L49, p56). That this constructed meaning is not totally coincident with the external world is made even more evident when it is said in *V*, that Foppl's planetarium "remained after all a parody of space" (V, p239-240).

The particular pertinence of the recurrent imagery of stars and astrology to the phenomena of projection is evident in Jung's statement that astrology is a primordial example of projection: "Such projections repeat themselves wherever man tries to explore an empty darkness and involuntarily fills it with living form" (Jung 1953 c1943, p234). This metaphor of the planetarium is also particularly useful in that it contrasts with the experience of the protagonist of John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* when he experiences the night-sky as divorced from the ^{overlaid} ^{idea} of a 'dome of heaven' centred about the earth (this 'dome' effect being similar to the representations provided by the planetarium):

The stars were no longer points on a black hemisphere that hung like a sheltering roof above his head; the relationship between them he now saw in three dimensions, of which the one most deeply felt was depth.... Viewed in this manner, the constellations lost their sense entirely; their spurious character revealed itself, as did the false presupposition of the celestial navigator, and Ebenezer felt bereft of orientation. He could no longer think of up and down: the stars were simply *out there*, as well below him as above, and the wind appeared to howl not from the Bay but from the firmament itself, from the endless corridors of space. 'Madness!' Henry whispered.
(Barth 1969 c1960, p361)

Ebenezer's reaction to this realisation is overt, losing his sense of balance and feeling threatened by the unstructured chaos of space. In *Mason & Dixon*, Mason has a terrifying vision similar to that of Ebenezer's:

¹³⁹ Edinger's 'Outline of Analytical Psychology 4', paraphrased by Julius Rowan Raper (Raper 1992, p149).

... rigid with fear, Mason experiences a curious optical re-adjustment. The stars no longer spread as upon a Dom'd Surface, —he now beholds them in the *Third Dimension* as well, —the Eye creating its own Zed-Axis, along which the star-chok'd depths near and far rush both inward and away, and soon, quite soon, billowing out of control. He collects that the Heavenly Dome has been put there as *Protection*, in an agreement among Observers to report only what it is safe to see. (Pynchon 1997, p725)

Mason's intimation that the false projection of the 'Heavenly Dome' conceals the threatening chaos of the world is somewhat analogous to Jung's discovery that schizophrenic patients find drawing or painting a picture of their psychic situation therapeutic; that reified representations of the chaotic experience of the patient provide a safety barrier that protects one from the threat of chaos:

In this way the apparently incomprehensible and unmanageable chaos of his total situation is visualised and objectified; it can be observed at a distance by his conscious mind, analysed, and interpreted. The effect of this method is evidently due to the fact that the originally chaotic or frightening impression is replaced by the picture, which, as it were, covers it up. (Jung 1960 c1906d, p260)

In *Gravity's Rainbow* a similar 'covering up' of unmanageable and threatening chaos is presented in the rigidly structured sadomasochistic master-slave relations of Blicero, Katje and Gottfried. The trio's fetishistic game of playing out a perverted version of the roles of Hansel and Gretel is described by Katje as being "their preserving routine, their shelter, against what outside none of them can bear—the War, the absolute rule of chance, their own pitiable contingency here, in its midst" (GR, p96). From Katje's perspective: "it's better, she believes, to enter into some formal, rationalised version of what, outside, proceeds without form or decent limit day and night" (GR, p437). The three thus attempt to escape the chaos of the world of the war through retreating into the representationally mediated roles of archetypal ordered narrative structure.

Distinct from the idea that the objects of the outer world are invested with meaning through the inner interpretive and projective acts of humans, though related to the same theme of projected meaning, Julius Rowan Raper states that *V.* is a novel of intentionality, demonstrating Sartre's proposition that we are our consciousness of objects (Raper 1992, p37).¹⁴⁰ *V.* presents a gamut of characters who are obsessed with lifeless objects: Rachel is shown to be in love with her MG (*V.*, p28-29), just as Pig is in love with his Harley-Davidson (*V.*, p22), the painter Slab uses cheese danish as the subject of more than 35 paintings (*V.*, p282), Eigenvalue the dentist is obsessed with teeth and prizes a set of pure titanium dentures (*V.*, p152-153), Mantissa is obsessed with Botticelli's painting of Venus (which he tries to steal) (*V.*, p209), Da Conho the mad Brazilian Zionist salad man at

¹⁴⁰ Sartre's philosophy is directly referred to in *V.* when Pig Bodine asks Rachel "What do you think of Sartre's thesis that we are all impersonating an identity?" (*V.*, p130). This occurs at a party at which they speak in "proper nouns" (*V.*, p131), a way of referring to oneself as an object.

Schlozhauer's Trocadero is obsessed with a machine gun (with which he longs to defend an unidentified kibbutz against Arabs) (V, p23), and Brenda Wigglesworth proudly announces that she owns 72 pairs of Bermuda shorts (V, p452). This obsession with objects is related to the phenomenon of human subjects becoming object-like, as the difference between longing to possess objects and actually becoming them is lost on many characters. As well as the overriding concern with plastic surgery presented in the humorously painful "Chapter Four: In which Esther gets a nose job" (V, p95-110), which provides historical details as to the development of modern plastic surgery, examples of humans becoming object-like abound in the novel. Bongo-Shaftesbury has a prosthetic arm and proudly calls himself an "electro-mechanical doll" (V, p80); Fergus Mixolydian features himself as an extension of his TV set (V, p56); on numerous occasions Profane thinks of himself as a yo yo and acts accordingly (V, p37); and Mélanie not only dreams of herself as being a mechanically operated doll (V, p402) but is treated by V. as a fetish object: "Something of a woman which gives pleasure but is not a woman. A shoe, a locket ... You are the same, not real but an object of pleasure" (V, p404). Throughout the novel, characters treat women as objects in such fashion, recalling Simone DeBeauvoir's famous argument about the male 'look' having the effect of 'objectifying' women.¹⁴¹ At one point in the novel Profane actually dreams of the possibility of "an all electronic woman":

Maybe her name would be Violet. Any problems with her, you could look it up in the maintenance manual. Module concept: fingers' weight, heart's temperature, mouth's size out of tolerance? Remove and replace, was all.
(V, p385)

Perhaps the best example of humans becoming more object-like is provided by Stencil's lengthy daydream about V., who, he notes, seemed to have "an obsession with bodily incorporating little bits of inert matter" (V, p488):

... skin radiant with the bloom of some new plastic; both eyes glass but now containing photoelectric cells, connected by silver electrodes to optic nerves of purest copper wire and leading to a brain exquisitely wrought as a diode matrix could ever be. Solenoid relays would be her ganglia, servo-actuators move her flawless nylon limbs, hydraulic fluid be sent by a platinum heart-pump through butyrate veins and arteries. Perhaps ... even a complex system of pressure transducers located in a marvellous vagina of polyethylene; the variable arms of their Wheatstone bridges all leading to a single silver cable which fed pleasure-voltages direct to the correct register of the digital machine in her skull. And when she smiled or grinned in ecstasy there would gleam her crowning feature: Eigenvalue's precious dentures.
(V, p411-412)

At the same time as humans become more object-like, objects are shown to take on a life of their own. As Itague states, "we foist the humanity we have lost on inanimate objects and abstract theories" (V, p405). Profane, a clumsy *schlemihl* "whose vocabulary it seemed was made up of nothing but wrong words" (V, p137), figures himself on numerous occasions as being at the mercy of the external world; as "hardly a man: somebody who

¹⁴¹ See particularly (DeBeauvoir 1988 c1949, p17-18).

lies back and takes it from objects, like any passive woman" (V, p288), and as the descendent of Job (V, p224). He believes that he is conspired against by objects: "inanimate objects and he could not live in peace" (V, p37). "They've declared war on me", he tells Rachel (V, p301). When Profane works as a security guard, passing time by reading the illuminatingly-titled novel *Existentialist Sheriff*, the test dummies SHOCK ("synthetic human object, casualty kinematics" (V, p285)) and SHROUD ("synthetic human, radiation output determined" (V, p284)) threaten him with the statement: "Me and SHOCK are what you and everybody will be someday" (V, p286). The reference in V. to the "nearly imperceptible line between an eye that reflects and an eye that receives" (V, p94) thus come to refer to the paranoid projection of inner human qualities upon the lifeless objects of the outer world, as well as the human introjection of object-like qualities. A further allusion to this idea is provided by George Levine's interpretation of the name 'Vheissu' (a place obsessed about by characters as the key to the conspiratorial "subterranean network of natural tunnels" (V, p197)) as alluding to 'Wie heisst du?' (where are you?), Veçu (Sartre's term for lived experience), and/or 'V is you' (Levine 1976, p136). All of these are illuminating in so far as they refer to the human act of investing the outside world with personality.¹⁴² The interpretation of Vheissu as 'V is you' is enlightening inasmuch as it insinuates that V is an object of projected significance, whose import lies solely within the mind of the paranoid individual; that V is, in a Sartrean sense, he or she who witnesses V in such a fashion.

Despite the fact that they are characterised as being diametrically opposite personalities, the two main protagonists of V., Benny Profane and Herbert Stencil, both project their own sense of meaning upon the world in equally paranoid ways. Whereas Stencil is involved in an active quest for V and Profane's profanity lies in his avoidance of the very objects that he seeks (women), both Stencil's and Profane's visions of the world are determined by their individual obsessions. Just as Rachel accuses Benny—"You've taken your own flabby, clumsy soul and amplified it into a Universal Principle" (V, p383)—Eigenvalue remarks to Stencil: "In a world such as you inhabit, Mr. Stencil, any cluster of phenomena can be a conspiracy" (V, p154). Even the statement that Stencil's character is contrary to Profane's (in that Stencil is actively directed, as opposed to Profane's wilful avoidance of ends) is refuted within the novel by Stencil's realisation that he by no means wishes to end his search:

Finding her: what then? Only that what love there was to Stencil had been directed entirely inward, toward this acquired sense of animateness. Having found this he could hardly release it, it was too dear. To sustain it he had to hunt V.; but if he should find her, where else would there be to go but back into half-consciousness? He tried not to think, therefore, about any end to the search. Approach and avoid.

¹⁴² Even more illuminating is the fact that Levine's interpretation of the word 'Vheissu' is led by his own desire to draw meaning from an indeterminate term, leading him to an act of projecting meaning upon this term himself, exactly what his interpretations of the word have led him to understand.

(V, p55)¹⁴³

In Pynchon's novels there are numerous examples of directed activity lacking determinate end points of meaning. Just as "in [Stencil's] search the motive is part of the quarry" (V, p387) in *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa's endless sorting of information concerning the Tristero is likened to the function of Maxwell's Demon: "'To keep it all cycling'" (L49, p72), and to Pierce's invective, "keep it bouncing" (L49, p123). As is shown by these examples, as well as Profane's 'yo-yoing' of repetitive movement (V, p37), motion functions as an end in itself. For it is through the constant act of will of the paranoid sorting and interpretation of information that characters stave off the chaotic meaninglessness of the world, projecting order and structured meaning upon the meaningless objects of the world. A character in Kathy Acker's *Empire of the Senseless*, trapped in the chaotic flux of a world that refuses to conform to meaning and confronted by a possible loss of self, remarks:

Finally I was lost. My total being could have been a total scream. My total being could have somersaulted in and into that panic which is nihilism. *But an act of will kept the fiction of 'me' going.*
(Acker 1988, p147—my emphasis)

The paranoid notion of the connectedness of the world involves the structural centrality of the paranoid's obsession: the subjectively defined *idée fixe* that provides the centre about which he or she interprets coincidences, and to which, according to the paranoid, everything ultimately relates. In Umberto Eco's novel *Foucault's Pendulum*, a character who is himself obsessed with the Templars wryly comments upon the notion of *idée fixe*, remarking: "'The lunatic is all *idée fixe*, and whatever he comes across confirms his lunacy. You can tell him by the liberties he takes with common sense, by his flashes of inspiration, and by the fact that sooner or later he brings up the Templars'" (Eco 1990 c1988, p67).

The Crying of Lot 49 provides such examples of paranoid obsession as Mike Fallopian's fixation with the significance of the first confrontation between ~~the~~ Russia and the United States in the 1860s (L49, p33) and Oedipa's lawyer, Roseman, who, driven by admiration and jealousy, is obsessed with the television character Perry Mason, suspiciously hiding his draft of "*The Profession v. Perry Mason, A not-so hypothetical Indictment*" from her: "'You might have been one of Perry Mason's spies,' said Roseman. After thinking a minute he added, 'Ha, ha'" (L49, p11-12).

¹⁴³ Stencil's method of "approach and avoid" presents a situation similar to that implied by R.D. Laing's statement, made in the context of a discussion of paranoid projective systems, that "[a]n action will be regarded as irrational if it is ostensibly a means towards an end, such that this means leads to an end that it purports to avoid" (cited in (Kirsner 1976, p147).)

Gravity's Rainbow presents Roger Pointsman's obsession with 'The Book', which, according to Thomas Schaub, is identifiable as Pavlov's *Conditioned Reflexes and Psychiatry*, chapter XIV of which contains Pavlov's discussion of paranoia (Schaub 1981, p90). More important than this, with regard to Pynchon's novels, is the fact that the protagonists' fixations constitute not only the objects of their paranoid quests but are also the subjects of the novels themselves.

In all of these examples, however, the object of the quest, the central hub of paranoid interpretation, is entirely absent. The manifest absence of these central points of reference is pertinent both to the preclusion of normative vision within Pynchon's works and to their eternal deferral of revelation. The quest and confusion over V.'s V, *The Crying of Lot 49*'s Tristero, and *Gravity's Rainbow*'s rocket are all motivated by the conspicuous absence of the very object pursued. The reader is thus faced with centres of characters' paranoid interpretation that are entirely absent. However, these absent centres of paranoid interpretation are felt by characters to completely surround. At one point in *The Crying of Lot 49*, for example, it is remarked that Oedipa's revelations came "crowding in exponentially, until everything she saw, smelled, dreamed, remembered, would somehow come to be woven into the Tristero" (L49, p56). Even early in *Gravity's Rainbow* Slothrop is said to have "become obsessed with the idea of a rocket with his name written on it—if they're really set on getting him ('They' embracing possibilities far far beyond Nazi Germany) that's the surest way, doesn't cost them a thing to paint his name *on every one, right?*" (GR, p25). As well as the absent object of the paranoiac's quest, the central point of paranoid interpretation is also, in a sense, the paranoiac himself or herself. Slothrop is obsessed not only by the rocket, but also by the idea that the rocket is directed at ^{him}himself. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa entertains the possibility that the Tristero does not exist and that her discovery of clues leading to belief in its existence was part of a plot directed at ^{her}herself, a supposition that amounts to the idea that a lack of conspiracy is in itself a conspiracy (L49, p118). As Oedipa remarks, "the true paranoid" is one "for whom all is organised in spheres joyful or threatening about the central pulse of himself" (L49, p89).¹⁴⁴ That the centre of paranoid interpretation is seen as being both the paranoiac's

¹⁴⁴ Peter Chadwick defines this sort of interpretation of events as suffering from 'delusions of reference': the paranoiac mistakenly identifying hermeneutic signs in the everyday presentations of the world which are interpreted as pointing to the centrality of the paranoiac (Chadwick 1992, p6). Vladimir Nabokov's short story *Signs and Symbols* presents a character who suffers from 'referential mania', highlighting the linguistic elements of the paranoiac's belief that phenomena are centred about and directed toward his person in a convoluted conspiracy understandable only by the paranoiac himself, the character described as being "a dense tangle of logically interacting illusions, making him totally inaccessible to normal minds" (Nabokov 1958 c1948, p56). In a passage, worth recounting at length for its incisive portrayal of the paranoiac's interpretation of all insignificant outside events as relating directly to himself, a doctor explains 'referential mania': "In these very rare cases, the patient imagines that everything happening around him is a veiled reference to his personality and his existence. He excludes real people from the conspiracy because he considers himself to be so much more intelligent than other men. Phenomenal nature shadows him wherever he goes. Clouds in the staring sky transmit to one another, by means of

idée fixe and his or her own person points to the fact that the obsessive object is actually an internal object of the paranoiac, cognitively projected outwards by the paranoiac's will.¹⁴⁵

The paranoiac's belief that he or she is the focal point of conspiratorial plots directed at his or her person is a condition that is identified by psychoanalytic discourse as a megalomaniacal delusion, an integral component of the paranoid condition. On this subject, Charles Rycroft mentions the deluded 'ideas of reference' of the paranoiac, a psychoanalytical phrase that denotes "[t]he symptom, often psychotic, of interpreting indifferent phenomena as though they had reference to oneself" (Rycroft 1977 c1968, p138). *Gravity's Rainbow* provides a number of examples of such phenomena, in which characters spuriously feel that conspiracies are directed at themselves. Tchiterine, for example, believes that his assignment in Central Asia is being mysteriously directed in order to enable him to meet his brother (GR, p352) and Achtfaden views the events of 1904 as directed at his present incarceration (GR, p452). The paranoiac's 'megalomaniacal' interpretation of the world as ultimately referring to oneself thus places him or her at the hermeneutic centre of his/her world.¹⁴⁶ But the position of centrality that the paranoid ascribes to his or her self is yet a powerless one, for the position of centrality that the paranoiac inhabits defines him or her as the victim of plots and conspiracies, at the mercy of malevolent forces. So although Pynchon's paranoid characters author a tenuous sense of centrality, their own power of will is displaced and projected upon unseen outside forces, the paranoid feeling his or her self to be at the centre of a will that is not his or her own. In a vicious circle, the defensive reaction to alienation and disempowerment has alienation and disempowerment as its end product.¹⁴⁷ At the same time as the paranoiac is

slow signs, incredibly detailed information about him. His inmost thoughts are discussed at nightfall, in manual alphabet, by darkly gesticulating trees. Pebbles or stains or sun flecks form patterns representing in some awful way messages which he must intercept. Everything is a cipher and of everything he is the theme.... He must be always on his guard and devote every minute and module of life to the undulation of things. The very air he exhales is indexed and filed away" (Nabokov 1958 c1948, p54-55).

¹⁴⁵ In *V.*, characters play with the idea, ascribed to Machiavelli, that human actions (the aggregate of which is history) are the result of the forces of *virtu* and *fortuna*, will and fate, "individual agency" and "the rampant river Fortune" (*V.*, p199). As individual will loses its place, characters increasingly see themselves as wholly in the hands of the conspiratorial mechanisms of fate, alienated and disempowered. However, the paranoiac's interpretation of the forces of chance and coincidence ('fate') as being controlled by the external power of malevolent conspirators is, in fact, occasioned by the projection of his or her inner mindscape or shaping imagination ('will') upon the external world.

¹⁴⁶ R.D. Laing's analysis of such paranoid ideas of reference explains this phenomenon as a defensive reaction to the decentred alienation of the subject: "In typical paranoid ideas of reference, the person feels that the murmurings and mutterings he hears as he walks past a street crowd are about him ... What tortures him is not so much his delusions of reference, but his harrowing suspicion that he is of no importance to anyone, that no one is referring to him at all.... What constantly preoccupies and torments the paranoid is usually the precise opposite of what at first is most apparent. He is persecuted by being the centre of everyone else's world, yet he is preoccupied with the thought that he never occupies first place in anyone's affection" (Laing 1961, p136-137).

¹⁴⁷ As W.W. Meisner writes, "The paranoid is continually taken up in the struggle over personal autonomy, continually confronted with the threat of external control and subjection" (Meisner 1978,

the centre of conspiracies (in that he/she projects them as being centred about his/her person) the fact that conspiracies operate by virtue of their very exclusion of the paranoid paradoxically places the paranoid at a marginal position outside the centre of the perceived conspiracy.¹⁴⁸ The paranoid in the literature analysed here thus presents an ambiguous and ambivalent inside/outside, centre/margin relation to conspiracy. On the one hand the paranoid is the centre of the conspiracy, which he/she witnesses as being directed at his/her person and which is defined by the paranoid's own *idée fixe*, the paranoid being its origin (in the sense of mentally projected creation) and its authorial centre. On the other, the paranoid defines himself/herself as intrinsically external to the conspiracy, attributing its central point of origin of the plot to the outside world, relating directly to his/her exclusion and hence position of exteriority.

p108). According to Meisnerr, the price exacted by the defensive mechanism deployed by the paranoid in order to regain a sense of autonomy is, paradoxically, a loss of sense of personal autonomy (in the face of a powerful enemy): "Paranoid autonomy is a fragile autonomy at best, really a pseudoautonomy. But the paranoid construction gives it some vitality and support. Autonomy is achieved only in terms of the oppositional defence against external forces. Autonomy is maintained in the struggle against the enemy. When the struggle ends autonomy ends. There is, therefore, an inner necessity to have and preserve an enemy against which one can struggle. Not to have an enemy is to lose autonomy (pseudoautonomy)—to lose a sense of oneself as an independent agent, an independent reality. It is to be swallowed up and become as nothing" (Meisnerr 1978, p316).

¹⁴⁸ This idea that conspiracies operate by virtue of their exclusivity is a major constituent of both characters' characterisation of conspiracies and narrative definitions of conspiracy. In *Libra*, the narrator defines conspiracy as "the inside game, cold, sure, undistracted, forever closed off to us" (DeLillo 1988, p440). A similar focus upon the paranoid's lack of a certain knowledge constituting a rupture between him/her and those who guard this valuable information is present in DeLillo's *Underworld*, as one character asks, "What's the point of all the secret codes on a U.S. dollar except to disconnect you from the people who know the facts?" (DeLillo 1997, p365). In William Gaddis's *A Frolic of His Own* a character articulates the view that the legal system is a conspiracy, the complicated self-referentiality of its language excluding the possibility of an outside public understanding the meanings and significances of this discourse: "—Legal language, I mean who can understand legal language but another lawyer, it's like a, I mean it's a conspiracy, think about it Harry. It's a conspiracy. / —Of course it is, I don't even have to think about it. Every profession is a conspiracy against the public, every profession protects itself with a language of its own" (Gaddis 1995 c1994, p284). A consummate example of conspiracy defined as exclusion is presented in *Underworld* when a character stoned on unusually strong hashish has a paranoid reaction, worth relating at length not only for its insistence on the sense of exclusion of the paranoid, but also for the simultaneous focus on the fact that the paranoid is 'surrounded' by 'connections' and 'deeper meaning': "He was surrounded by enemies. Not enemies but connections, a network of things and people. Not people exactly but figures—things and figures and levels and knowledge that he was completely helpless to enter.... Paranoid. Now he knew what it meant, this word that was bandied and bruited so easily, and he sensed the connections being made around him, all the objects and shaped silhouettes and levels of knowledge—not knowledge exactly but insidious intent. But not that either—some deeper meaning that existed solely to keep him from knowing what it was" (DeLillo 1997, p421—my emphasis). The passage in *Gravity's Rainbow* which describes paranoia as "nothing less than the outset, the leading edge, of the discovery that *everything is connected*" (GR, p703) occurs within the text as a description of similarly drug-induced paranoia. It defines paranoia as the belief that 'everything is connected', ^{although} ~~however~~ this passage also identifies the paranoid character as being "held at the edge" (GR, p703) of this connectedness and as not yet having found "a route In" (GR, p703) insisting upon his exclusion from the connectedness of the whole.

The paranoiac is thus, in a sense, a decentred centre of conspiracy, a centre that always holds itself to a position of exteriority.¹⁴⁹ While representations of paranoia have shown it to arise as a result of the threat of a decentred world, and to consist of the task of conceptually recentering the world about the focal point of the paranoiac, the accomplishment of the paranoid task is a phyrrie victory, leading to an ambivalent position of decentred centrality when it was, in fact, a decentred position from which the paranoiac attempted to rescue his or her self in the first place.

Despite the inherent criticism in *V.* of certain characters' obsessions with lifeless objects and abstract theories, Pynchon's work demonstrates that the projection of human meaning upon lifeless objects is an almost universal constant. The name of the town that *The Crying of Lot 49* is set in, 'San Narciso', itself refers to acts of projection, containing an obvious allusion to the myth of Narcissus, as does the name of its motel 'Echo Courts' and the recurrent narrative presentations within Echo Courts of mirrors. According to Julius Rowan Raper, Narcissus uses the outside world chiefly as a mirror of an otherwise hidden self (Raper 1992, p147). This reading of the myth is relevant to the place of mirrors in

¹⁴⁹ This idea of a decentred centre has similarities to the theory of the structure of discourse presented by Jacques Derrida's essay *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*. In this essay Derrida argues that the conceptual centre of 'discourse in the human sciences' (Derrida is remarkably unclear as to precisely what this refers to, I have therefore taken the liberty to interpret this ambiguous phrase as relating to narrative structure, though this is obviously not the limit of Derrida's argument) has classically been witnessed as being "paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside* it ... The centre is at the centre of the totality, and yet, since the centre does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality) the totality has its centre elsewhere. The centre is not the centre" (Derrida 1978a, p279). This idea has a recognisable similarity to the well-known (at least within mathematical discourses) enigma presented within the paradoxical proposal of 'the set of all possible sets'. Briefly, 'the set of all possible sets' by definition must contain all sets and therefore must contain itself (as a set that is 'the set of all possible sets') which leads to a problematic infinite progression in which 'the set of all possible sets' must contain itself, yet if it does so then it is no longer properly 'the set of all possible sets' as, in this instance, a new set has been proposed that is no longer included. This thus presents us with a situation in which the central point of definition 'the set of all possible sets' must, by necessity, lie outside itself and yet at the same time must include itself. The 'set of all possible sets' is thus presented as a centre that is held outside ~~of~~ itself. This realisation of the decentred position of the centre, and the very possibility of "thinking the structurality of structure" (Derrida 1978a, p280) considering the possibility of the non-existence of centre (despite the fact that, as Derrida writes, "the notion of a structure lacking any centre represents the unthinkable itself" (Derrida 1978a, p279)) eventually leads Derrida to state, "This was the moment when, in the absence of a centre or origin, everything became discourse ... that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely" (Derrida 1978a, p280). Although the analogy between Derrida's analysis of the structurality of structure and the paranoiac's position as decentred centre might be regarded as somewhat loose, the confusion that occurs over the point of centrality in a paranoiac's perception of conspiracy does seem to lead to the same conclusion as Derrida's argument. The loss of centrality ends in 'everything becoming discourse', unreferenced projected signification that is separated from the potential referent point of the 'transcendental signified', hence leading to an unending play of signification.

The Crying of Lot 49, particularly during the episode of Oedipa's seduction by Metzger when it is related that "[a]t some point [Oedipa] went into the bathroom, tried to find her image in the mirror and couldn't. She had a moment of nearly pure terror" (L49, p27). Oedipa soon learns her lack of self(-image) is due to the simple fact that the mirror was broken. However, mirrors continue to haunt her, particularly when she has a nightmare that hints at the threatening possibility that her quest for the Tristero is a paranoid projection of her inner mindscape, distinct from the 'real' world as is a dream: "something about a mirror, across from her bed. Nothing specific, only a possibility, nothing she could see.... When she woke in the morning, she was sitting bolt upright, staring into the mirror at her own exhausted face" (Lot49, p69-70). *The Crying of Lot 49*'s ironic allusions to Narcissus's love-struck observation of himself in a reflective pool of water is relevant to a passage in *V.* quoted earlier: "There must also be a nearly imperceptible line between an eye that reflects and an eye that receives" (*V.*, p94). In *The Crying of Lot 49* there are similarly illuminating references to the tension between outwardly directed sight and reflective vision. At one point in the novel, Oedipa comes to find Echo Courts impossible "either because of the stillness of the pool and the blank windows that faced on it, or [due to the] prevalence of teenage voyeurs" (L49, p31). One of the places that Oedipa visits in order to obtain information about the Tristero is "a strange bar known as The Scope" (L49, p29). Oedipa is unnerved by the crowd in The Scope because "they all wore glasses and stared at you, silent" (L49, p31). Apart from the denotation of the word 'scope' as it occurs in the title of the bar, referring to an instrument used for observation (such as a telescope or microscope, or maybe even a kaleidoscope, gyroscope, or oscilloscope, thus expressing a sense of indeterminately delineated vision through its suggestion of a broad range of observation undefined in visual range), the word 'scope' also contains numerous connotations and derivative terms that prove enlightening. Coming from the Italian *scopo*, 'aim', and the Latin *scopium* and Greek *skopeo*, 'look at', the word 'scope' is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as: "outlook, purview, sweep or reach of observation or action, extent to which it is permissible or possible to range, opportunity, outlet, vent", and: "end aimed at, purpose, intention" The related term 'Scopophilia' is used in psychiatry to denote the mental quality of one who indulges in voyeurism. 'Scopolamine' is the name of a 'truth serum.' However, in *The Crying of Lot 49* Oedipa's voyeuristic fascination with the Tristero, her mental scope, does not allow for her to discover the truth, but threatens her investigations with a narcissistic projection of her own mental images upon the outer world; her vision directed inwards through a reflective vision of self. As John Docker writes of an adjunctive definition of scopophilia: "There is also scopophilia as narcissistic, as 'identification with the image seen'" (Docker 1994, p75). Charles Rycroft's statement, implying an association between narcissism and solipsism, is relevant here: "[T]he discovery that one is not the only pebble on the beach and that the world was not constructed for one's own benefit involves a loss of narcissism" (Rycroft 1977 c1968, p94-95). Such a correlation between solipsistic vision and narcissism is further supported by

passages in *V.* that allude to the dangers inherent in the subjectively skewed scope of the individual. At one point in the novel, Profane has a dream that suggests the limits of projected meaning: "In this dream, he was all alone, as usual. Walking on a street at night were there was nothing but his own field of vision alive" (*V.*, p39). A similar threat of solipsistic entrapment arises in relation to Stencil's V-tunnel-vision when he thinks that, due to the obsessive nature of his quest, it would eventually "be he and *V.* all alone, in a world that somehow had lost sight of them both" (*V.*, p55). A similar threat of solipsistic displacement from the external world is mentioned by Jung's discussion of the mechanisms of projection:

The effect of projection is to isolate the subject from his environment, since instead of a real relation to it there is now only an illusory one. Projections change the world into the replica of one's own unknown face. In the last analysis, therefore, they lead to an autoerotic or autistic condition in which one dreams a world whose reality remains forever unattainable.
(Jung 1959 c1950, p9)

Jung's terms 'autoerotic' and 'autistic' may here be read as pertaining to narcissism and solipsism respectively, both occurring in a context suggestive of the fact that, in the case of projection, "what is being spun is a cocoon, which in the end will completely envelop [one]" (Jung 1959 c1950, p10). This 'cocoon' of solipsism is the creation and projection of a fictional, mental universe that is narcissistically imposed upon oneself. In DeLillo's *Running Dog*, one of the few characters not obsessed with a paranoid quest remarks upon the narcissistic solipsism inherent in such searches:

Moll was suspicious of quests. At the bottom of most long and obsessive searches, in her view, was some vital deficiency on the part of the individual in pursuit, ... Even more depressing than the nature of a given quest was the likely result. Whether people searched for an object of some kind, or inner occasion, or answer, or state of being, it was almost always disappointing. People came up against themselves in the end. Nothing but themselves.
(DeLillo 1992, p224)

James S. Hans follows a similarly negative, though more socially orientated conception of narcissism when he interpretively paraphrases the statement in *The Crying of Lot 49*, "how had it ^{ever} happened here, with the chances once so good for diversity?" (*L49*, p125), as meaning: "How did the openness of the New World turn into the closedness of narcissism?" (Hans 1995, p8). But, unlike Oedipus, Oedipa does not poke out her eyes when she discovers her shameful origins. Throughout the novel's development Oedipa learns not only of the disinherited masses of America, the outcasts and exiles similar to those originally responsible for the founding of America, but also of her vision of the world as originating within her own shaping imagination, (a vision of the world that formerly excluded the outcasts and exiles of America), and seeks in response to 'open her eyes' to these factors.¹⁵⁰ The correlation between narcissism and solipsistic paranoid projection is

¹⁵⁰ See particularly Oedipa's lament at America's failure to live up to its promise (*L49*, p124-125) and the statement that "Perhaps she'd be hounded someday as far as joining the Tristero itself ... in its

also present in Hermann Melville's *Moby Dick*, in which the myth of Narcissus is called "the key to it all" (Melville 1991 c1851, p3). Ahab sees his own part of nature in the white whale and transfers to it "not only all his bodily woes, but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations ... all truth with malice in it ... all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil" (Melville 1991 c1851, p187). This not only is Melville's way of revealing Ahab's paranoid inner life, but also demonstrates the narcissism that is involved in his obsession, asserted as an act of paranoid projection that is figured, in Anthony Storr's sense, as the mechanism "by which human beings disown what is unacceptable in themselves and attribute it wrongly to someone else" (Storr 1972, p80).

Given the negative connotations mentioned so far of the term 'narcissism', one might also note Freud's well-known association of the Narcissus myth with pathological behaviour. Elsewhere the term has come to be equated with everything selfish and disagreeable in contemporary culture.¹⁵¹ However, the term 'healthy narcissism' is also used in psychoanalysis to refer to proper levels of investment of energy (libido) in the self (Rycroft 1977 c1968, p94). In making the distinction between primary and secondary narcissism, Freud himself recognises that narcissism is not always a perversion. According to Freud, primary narcissism, associated with childhood formation of the ego-ideal (roughly equated with the 'conscience' or self-image that one tries to realise as actual) and ego-integrity (defined as "the limits to ... susceptibility to influence [from the outer world]"¹⁵²) "in this sense would not be a perversion, but the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation, a measure of which may justifiably be attributed to every living creature" (Freud 1995 c1914, p546). The works of Thomas Pynchon likewise imply that the narcissistic projection of oneself upon the outer world is a ^{phenomenon} phenomena intimately intertwined with all human perception. While James Hans writes that Oedipa: "is hooked on an endless circle around a self whose furrows have lost their fecundity precisely because they have been deliberately contained within the walls of delusion and fantasy" (Hans 1995, p9), this statement contains an implicit dichotomy between 'delusion and fantasy' on the one hand and 'reality' on the other. Hans implies that a presumed 'reality' could be experienced through an act of perception free of projected order, an apparent impossibility in these fictive worlds. In Pynchon's novels, projection is shown to be a necessary constituent of any view of the world, one that cannot be extracted from any vision of 'objective reality.' In *V.*, for example, all of the tales recounted by Stencil bear discernible traces of his individual bias. At one point, Eigenvalue remarks on how one story had "undergone considerable change: had become,

twilight, its aloofness, its waiting" (L49, p124) as compared to early presentations of her as a university educated (but uninterested in protest marches or sit-ins (L49, p71-72)), happily married "Young Republican" (L49, p51) with a family lawyer, living in a stable, sheltered middle-class world of muzak, daytime television, tupperware parties and therapy (L49, p5-10).

¹⁵¹ See particularly Christopher Lasch's scathing indictment of modern American culture contained in *The Culture of Narcissism* (Lasch 1979 c1978).

as Eigenvalue put it, Stencillized" (V, p228). Stencil's 'impersonations', eight short stories narratively presented as the tales of separate fictional characters (the only common factor being the appearance of information relating to V) that actually originate from Stencil's imagination, "the general technique ... which is not exactly the same as 'seeing the other person's point of view'; for it involved, say, wearing clothes that Stencil wouldn't be seen dead in, eating foods that would have made Stencil gag, living in unfamiliar digs, frequenting bars or cafés of a non-Stencillian character" (V, p62) not only represent the perspectival multiplicity of reality, but also suggest the impossibility of seeing the world as anything but a sort of personal reconstruction, a kind of template or reproduction demarcated by individual obsessions. As psychiatrist Kenneth Mark Colby writes:

... humans are neither subjective nor objective; they are projective. In forming classifications, they project their intentions onto the world. Thus the world of experience consists both of our interactive relations and the objects to which we relate depending on our interests.
(Colby 1975, p2)

Jung similarly alludes to the theory that projection is always already present in any vision of the world: "Strictly speaking, projection is never made; it happens, it is simply there. In the darkness of anything external to me I find, without recognising it as such, an interior or psychic life that is my own" (Jung 1953 c1943, p234).¹⁵³ Scientist Werner Heisenberg (referred to briefly in *Gravity's Rainbow*) further evinces the idea that the notion of an absolute distinction between observer and observed, active subject and passive object, is unsatisfactory and impossible:

The familiar classification of the world into subject and object, inner and outer world, body and soul, somehow no longer quite applies, and indeed leads to difficulties.... The object of research is no longer nature in itself but rather nature exposed to man's questioning, and to this extent man here also meets himself.
(Heisenberg 1959, p70-71)

In Pynchon's works, the possibility that one might not realise that any act of perception necessarily involves the projection of meaning and order is presented as being the major danger of narcissistic paranoid projection. Marshall McLuhan's reading of the Narcissus myth is explicit in stating that Narcissus did not know that it was his own reflection that he fell in love with:¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² See particularly (Freud 1995 c1914, pp546-547, 555, 558-559).

¹⁵³ This notion is similar to Gadamer's understanding of the ubiquity of 'prejudice' in the practice of hermeneutics. As Jean Grondin explains, "every act of understanding is conditioned by its motivations or prejudices. Prejudices or fore-understandings, Gadamer writes, should be considered almost like transcendental 'conditions of understanding.' ... We understand and strive for truth because we are led on by expectations of meaning.... There can be no question of merely setting aside one's prejudices; the object is, rather, to recognise and work them out interpretatively" (Grondin 1994 c1991, p111).

¹⁵⁴ This is supported by a reading of the Narcissus myth as it is presented in Mary M. Innes's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. This version of the myth states that Narcissus was initially unaware of the fact that he was in love with his own reflection: "Unwittingly, he desired himself ... He did not know what he was looking at" (Ovid 1955, p85). As the story progresses, Narcissus does come to a

... the wisdom of the Narcissus myth does not convey any idea that Narcissus fell in love with anything he regarded as himself. Obviously he would have had very different feelings about the image had he known it was an extension or repetition of himself.

(McLuhan 1994 c1964, p41-42)

The consequences of such a mistake are shown by Pynchon's texts to be an entrapment of the individual within a solipsistic 'closed system' of meaning. McLuhan's further comments on Narcissus are explicit in suggesting the closed system:

Narcissus ... is from the Greek word *narcosis*, or numbness. The youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection for another person. This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until he became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image. The nymph Echo tried to win his love with fragments of his own speech, but in vain. He was numb. He had adapted to his extension of himself and had become a closed system.

(McLuhan 1994 c1964, p41)

The metaphor of the closed system is most relevant in Pynchon's works in relation to the theme of entropy. The notion of entropy, as explicated by the second law of thermodynamics, refers to the possible heat death of the universe and has been taken by some as a metaphor for the entropic decay of society. As Henry Adams writes in *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*: "To the vulgar and ignorant historian [entropy] meant only that the ash-heap was constantly increasing in size" (Adams 1919, p142). In Pynchon's early short story, 'Entropy', the Laws of Thermodynamics are interpreted by a character in a similar fashion: "'you can't win, things are going to get worse before they get better, who says they're going to get better'" (Pynchon 1995 c1960, p87). In 'Entropy', the sterile, hermetically sealed apartment which Callisto inhabits comes to represent the thermodynamic model of entropy (the heat-death of the universe thought to be taking place outside Callisto's window) whereas Mulligan's wild lease-breaking party symbolises the communications-theory model of entropy, the entropic decay of communicational coherence taking place in an open, unstructured system (Pynchon 1995 c 1960). Sidney Stencil's analysis of the "double vision" of the politics of the "Right and Left; the hothouse and the street" similarly invokes a distinction between closed and open systems: "The Right can only live and work hermetically, in the hothouse of the past, while outside the Left prosecute their affairs in the streets by manipulated mob violence" (V, p468). An example of a closed system is also presented in V. in Slab's painting of a partridge in a pear tree. Slab's analysis of the painting expresses the inevitable entropic death that occurs as a result of existence in a closed system:

'The partridge eats pears off the tree, and his droppings in turn nourish the tree which grows higher and higher, every day lifting the partridge up and at the same time assuring him of a continuous supply of good.' 'It is perpetual motion except for one thing.' He pointed out to a gargoyle with sharp fangs near the top of the picture. The point of the largest fang lay on an imaginary line projected parallel

realisation that it is himself that he adores. It is the unmanageable recognition of this fact that leads to his tragic demise (Ovid 1955, p86-87).

to the axis of the tree and drawn through the head of the bird. 'It could just as well have been a low-flying aircraft or high-tension wire,' Slab said. 'But someday that bird will be impaled on the gargoyle's teeth.' ...
(V, p282)

The metaphorisation of the closed system as a hothouse is also present in Fausto Majstral's theory that "V. was an obsession after all, and that such an obsession is a hothouse: constant temperature, windless, too crowded with particoloured sports, unnatural blooms" (V, p448), suggesting a correlation between the narcissistic solipsism of obsessive paranoia and the entropic decay of the closed system. Both narcissism and the closed system are also suggested by Victoria's use of mirrors in her fetishistic relationship with her young lover, the ballet dancer Mélanie (V, p409).¹⁵⁵ Pynchon's implicit criticism of the narcissistic 'closed system' love relationship that Victoria is involved in is part of a larger critique of unselfconscious systems of world-creation. The novel's description of the episode, alluding to entropic decay, states that: "the pattern ... was symbiotic and mutual" (V, p409-410) and that there was: "No movement, but minimum friction" (V, p409). This form of entropy is shown to refer to the fragmentation and dissolution of self, the narrative describing Melanie's: "Frustration at not being able to fragment herself into an audience enough", and V.'s "progression towards inanimateness" (V, p410). The entire episode is said to be: "a variation on the ... theme ... 'the act of love and the act of death are one.' Dead at last they would be one with the inanimate universe" (V, p410). When V, in her later incarnation as the Bad Priest, dies, her death is figured as a "disassembly" (V, p343). As one child remarks: "'She comes apart'" (V, 342). As she is pulled apart by the children of Malta she is manifested in a wig, an ivory comb, an artificial foot, a star sapphire navel, a set of false teeth, and a clockwork eye (V, p342-343), the implication being that she has become the very objects upon which she has fixated her attention. The qualities of these objects were prophesied by her own teaching of children in her role as the Bad Priest, instructing the boys of Malta to be like "the rock of their island", to become "like a crystal: beautiful and soulless" (V, p340). However, even this sort of introjection of objects and object-like qualities is shown to partake of a form of projected meaning, albeit a form of projected meaning that involves the denial of one's role in projectively constructing the 'effective reality' of lived experience. Pynchon's text suggests that any world-creation is a construct of the mind that holds notable similarities to the forms of paranoid projection. The denial of will (the power of the shaping imagination to determine one's vision of the world) that occurs in the introjection of object-like characteristics, according to V., is thus actually a wilful displacement of personality that requires acts of projection in order to

¹⁵⁵ According to Julius Rowan Raper, "Through mirrors, V. seeks to become a free or transcendent consciousness aware that she is intent upon an object, who is herself a freedom having her lover V.'s free consciousness as her own object" (Raper 1992, p41). Referring primarily to Sartre's formulation of the inherent problems of the love relationship contained in *Being and Nothingness*, Raper considers the mirror fetish scenes in V. to be "a keen parody of the difficulty that Sartre considers central to all human interrelationships and thus to the human condition: the longing to become a freedom that has as the

figure the outer objects of the world in a certain way. As Fausto Maijstral ^{points} ~~point~~ out, any view of the world, even one figured as "a succession of encounters between groups of living and a congruent world which simply doesn't care" (V, p290) is a construction of the mind.

It is Fausto Maijstral (one of the witnesses of V's disassembly) who, via a form of poetic narcissism, provides an alternative to the narcissistic denial of one's own active role in constructing the world of lived experience. Through the self-conscious use of metaphor, Fausto invests the landscape with his own self, humanising the external world rather than dehumanising it as does V. The rock of Malta, which V figures as beautifully soulless, is consciously metaphorically (in the sense that he is overtly conscious of its status as metaphor) viewed by Fausto as the womb of the Maltese people (V, p318). Fausto is aware that "metaphor has no value apart from its function; that it is a device, an artifice", and that he is cloaking the "innate mindlessness" of the "universe of things which simply are" with "comfortable and pious metaphor so that the 'practical' half of humanity may continue in the Great Lie", so that they may believe that "machines, dwellings, streets and weather ... share the same human motives, personal traits and fits of contrariness as they" (V, p326). It is his conscious recognition of the necessarily fictional element of this personification that allows him to escape the reifications of both V and Stencil to realise the positive potential of projection. The potential of projective metaphor to affirm hope and humanity is exhibited when he further writes:

The same motives which cause us to populate a dream-street also cause us to apply to a rock [Malta] human qualities like 'invincibility,' 'tenacity,' 'perseverance,' etc. More than metaphor, it is delusion. But on the strength of this delusion Malta survived.... It is the 'role' of the poet, this 20th Century. To lie.
(V, p326)

It is in this sense that, as Oedipa suspects in *The Crying of Lot 49*, "the act of metaphor [is] a thrust at truth and a lie" (L49, p89). As N. Katherine Hayles explains, "metaphors may be a thrust at truth because they hint at the constructed nature of reality; ... they are a lie because like any other language, they cannot penetrate the construction to touch reality as such" (Hayles 1991c, p116).

Opposed to Fausto's method of reading himself into the world through the use of projective metaphor and reading himself out again through his self-consciousness of the act, Stencil projects his concerns into situations but fails to extract himself. This threatens Stencil with the loss of a secure sense of selfhood. Stencil's technique in searching for V is called a "forcible dislocation of personality", related to his habit of "always [referring] to himself in the third person" (V, p62). The novel's presentation of Stencil's impersonations shows that he has blocked out his own realisation that it is he who is creating these

object of its intention another freedom of which it is the creator and, at the same time, to be aware of

characters. Whereas the first seven impersonations present a first-person narrative attributed to characters imagined by Stencil, the final impersonation features a narrative that touts itself as a pure consciousness of the objects and events described, a "field of vision" (V, p94) from which Stencil's personality has been completely expunged. Stencil still *is* the episode, in so far as it originates from his mind, but in his pursuit for knowledge of V he has forgotten his own place in the stories' constitution. This contradicts the motivating factor behind his search: "that Stencil was seeking in [V] his own identity" (V, p411). Whereas Stencil himself thinks that he "had all the identities he could cope with conveniently right at the moment: he was purely He Who Looks For V." (V, p226) it is precisely his definition of himself as an observer without a concurrent recognition of the fact of his own point of observation that leads to this fragmentation and dissolution of identity.

Similar to both the Bad Priest's disassembly and Stencil's dissolved and fragmented identity, further exhibited by the statement that he "had left pieces of himself (and V.) all over the western world" (V, p389), is the novel's description of Profane's dream, in which the total openness and chaos of 'the street' fragment and scatter Profane like so many inanimate objects:

To Profane, alone in the street, it would always seem maybe he was looking for something too to make the fact of his own disassembly as plausible as that of any machine. It was always at this point that the fear started: here that it would turn into a nightmare. Because now, if he kept going down that street, not only his ass but also his arms, legs, sponge brain and clock of a heart must be left behind to litter the pavement, be scattered among manhole covers.... Was he returning like the elephant to his graveyard, to lie down and soon become ivory in whose bulk slept, latent, exquisite shapes of chessmen, back-scratchers, hollow open-work Chinese spheres nested one inside the other?
(V, p40)

That an element of tempered paranoid projection necessarily exists in any construction of selfhood becomes evident through the association of anti-paranoia with the loss of self that takes place in *Gravity's Rainbow*. At one point in the novel, the loss of self is associated with the lack of a paranoid centre of interpretation and projection:

Slothrop feels himself sliding onto the anti-paranoid part of his cycle, feels the whole city around him going back roofless, vulnerable, uncentered as he is.... Either They have put him here for a reason, or he's just here. He isn't sure that he wouldn't, actually, rather have that *reason*....
(GR, p434)

As Slothrop finally succumbs to anti-paranoia, he begins "to thin, to scatter" (GR, p509). As the barriers between his self and his environment are lost he becomes a "crossroad" (GR, p626) and "is broken down ... and scattered" (GR, p738) becoming progressively narratively figured as a pure consciousness of objects, a field of observation that lacks an unfragmented, unified observer: "rusted beer cans, rubbers yellow with preterite seed,

itself both as a freedom and as the object of the beloved's free consciousness" (Raper 1992, p41).

Kleenex wadded to brain shapes hiding preterite snot, preterite tears, newspapers, broken glass, pieces of automobile ... not a thing in his head, just feeling natural" (GR, p626). In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Mucho undergoes a similar loss of self. After joining Dr. Hilarius's LSD testing program he is described by one character as "'losing his identity, ... Day by day, [he] is less himself and more generic.... He's a walking assembly of man'" (L49, p97). As Hilarius states: "'There is me, there are the others. You know, with the LSD, we're finding, the distinction begins to vanish. Egos lose their sharp edges'" (L49, p94). As opposed to Mucho, Hilarius states that he prefers to live "'in relative paranoia, where at least I know who I am and who the others are'" (L49, p94). In Pynchon's works, 'relative paranoia' is thus shown to be necessary for characters to negotiate a territory between the extremes of totally solipsistic paranoid narcissism and anti-paranoia in order to maintain a sense of self and identity. Despite the hazard of total paranoia's overwhelming and absorbing the self, elements of paranoia are shown to be a necessary constituent of any vision of the world.¹⁵⁶ One conclusion to be drawn from this is that projection—a manifestation of paranoid processes as it figures in Pynchon's work—is a form of fiction and fantasy, but a necessary one. As Hilarius states:

¹⁵⁶ The idea that paranoid processes are common to all human beings has been articulated by a number of prominent psychoanalysts. John Farrell's work, *Freud's Paranoid Quest: Psychoanalysis and Modern Suspicion* argues that "For Freud, in fact, we all participate in paranoid thinking: our very way of making sense of things is to him a manifestation of illness akin to paranoia" (Farrell 1996, p3) noting that Freud himself has remarked about paranoia "The moment a man asks about the meaning and value of life, he is sick, since objectively neither has any existence" (Freud 1961). Anthony Storr's comments on the ubiquity of paranoid processes, however, are far more overt: "Although most obvious in the insane, the capacity for paranoid projection is, regrettably, not confined to them. Indeed, we must assume that the whole of mankind possesses some underlying paranoid potential.... The tendency toward paranoid projection, though more deeply buried in 'normal' people, is far less intermittent and even more ubiquitous than the tendency towards depression" (Storr 1968, p96). Lacan's *Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis* articulates the idea that we are all, to varying degrees, paranoiacs, in a somewhat different manner: "What I have called paranoiac knowledge is shown, therefore, to correspond in its more or less archaic forms to certain critical moments that mark the history of man's mental genesis, each representing a stage in objectifying identification" (Lacan 1977 c1966a, p17). In Lacan's analysis, paranoia is both constitutive of the structure of the ego and generative of the interpretative drives that the ego later manifests: "And the two moments, when the subject denies himself and when he charges the other, become confused, and one discovers in him that paranoiac structure of the ego that finds its analogue in the fundamental negations described by Freud as the three delusions of jealousy, erotomania and interpretation" (Lacan 1977 c1966a, p20). As a final example, W.W. Meisner's seminal work on paranoia, *The Paranoid Process*, argues that "paranoia, as a form of psychopathology, cannot be simply dissociated from the positive forces and processes which serve to build up and maintain meaningful and constructive areas of human growth and experience" (Meisner 1978, p ix-x). According to Meisner, "paranoid conditions can range over a wide spectrum of intensities, ... the mechanisms and functions that characterise paranoid conditions are also identifiable in other relatively common, less pathological, and even normal aspects of human adaptation" (Meisner 1978, p96). For Meisner, as for others, the perceived ubiquity of paranoid processes in the human psyche is symptomatic of their importance to constructing one's vision of the world and one's place in it: "The essential insight I have tried to articulate and substantiate ... is that the basic mechanisms [of paranoia], which play themselves out in distorted and exaggerated forms in the pathology, are in fact the same basic mechanisms endemic to the human developmental process. These mechanisms contribute meaningfully and in profoundly important ways to the building up of human personality, to the establishment and sustaining of human identity,

'Cherish [your fantasy]!' ... 'What else do any of you have? Hold it tightly by its little tentacle, don't let the Freudians coax it away or the pharmacists poison it out of you. Whatever it is, hold it dear, for when you lose it you go over by that much to the others. You begin to cease to be.'
(L49, p95-96)

Both the extreme of paranoia and that of anti-paranoia lead to a loss of identity. In a case of extreme paranoia, Stencil projects his personality so completely into his task that it is lost. In a case similar to that of anti-paranoia, through the introjection of object-like qualities V projectively dislocates her humanity. As Oedipa poses the alternatives: "Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth" (L49, p125). According to this explication of binary possibilities, either everything is connected or nothing is connected; the world either radiates from a centre, or is totally centreless; the world is determined from without, or it is meaningless. While Oedipa comes to realise that such "excluded middles ... were bad shit, to be avoided" (L49, p125) she oscillates between the contrary (though, importantly, not contradictory), views of (a) inner power being directed upon the outer world (through paranoid projection) and (b) external (conspiratorial) power directed upon the inner world (herself): "Either Trystero did exist, in its own right, or it was being presumed, perhaps fantasised by Oedipa, so hung up on and interpenetrated with the dead man's estate" (L49, p75). As she later concludes, looking into a mirror at her own reflection: "Either way, they'll call it paranoia. They" (L49, p117). For both of these viewpoints invoke paranoia, the first as a form of thought processes that project internally constructed meaning upon the outer world, the second being an expression of the paranoid's fear of external threat. The confusion that Oedipa experiences over the question of the existence of the Tristero, (like the realisation of the ultimate falsity of the self-other opposition) leads her at one point to a brief loss of self: "she'd lost her bearings ... As if there could be no barriers between herself and the rest of the land" (L49, p122). These boundaries do return as the passage continues, and are shown to be linguistic. The barrier is the word: "San Narciso at that moment lost ... gave up its residue of uniqueness for her; became a name again, was assumed back into the American community of crust and mantle" (L49, p123). To reassert the linguistic boundaries of self is to succumb, inescapably, to relative paranoia: "it seemed the only way she could continue, and manage to be at all relevant ... was ... assumed full circle into some paranoia (L49, p125-126).

For Pynchon, whilst all world-creations are 'paranoid', some sense of structured order must be imposed on the chaotic postmodern world in order for the individual to be able to meaningfully respond to his or her surroundings. However, there is still the implication that one must be able to view reality in an ordered fashion and yet be aware of the uncertain value of that structure as an interpretative system. As has been demonstrated, for

and to the elaboration and maintenance of the social and cultural structures within which such identities

Section 4

Just Because You're Paranoid . . .

Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean that they aren't out to get you.

Urban adage

A paranoid is someone who is in full possession of the facts.

William S. Burroughs

In the previous sections of this thesis a variety of postmodern American novels have been shown to critically engage with the phenomenon of paranoia on a number of levels, analysing its motivating impulses and operating mechanisms in order to reveal its negative aspects. While the necessity for some form of mental shaping and structuring of the brute chaos of the world is acknowledged by postmodern American novels, paranoid world-creations are primarily criticised for their lack of reflexivity, their lack of awareness of the fact that all world-creations are contingent fictional constructions. To take paranoid world-creations as absolute has been shown to have potentially dangerous consequences. However, yet another vein to postmodern American literature's engagement with the subject of paranoia remains to be discussed: what might be called a critical recognition of the legitimacy of certain 'paranoid' modes of thought. One must be wary in stating that much postmodern American fiction engages positively with paranoid modes of thought, for the form and level of advocacy involved are specific, arising from the same critical impulse that commits many of the same works to actively criticise paranoid modes of belief. At times the advocacy is also ambiguously defined. English novelist Jean Rhys has asserted: "When people are paranoid you can bet your life they have something to be paranoid *about*" (cited in (Robins 1997, p64)) but postmodern fiction would take her assertion as warranting investigation rather than uninformed affirmation. Hunter S. Thompson's statement, "There is no such thing as paranoia" (Thompson 1995 c1994, p6) and Burroughs' famous adage, "A paranoid is someone who is in full possession of the facts"¹⁵⁷ by no means signify uncritical adherence to relentlessly suspicious antisocial attitudes. Rather they must be understood as referring to the employment of a 'paranoid' mode of critical interrogation.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ A statement that, although well-known within circles of Burroughs fans and conspiracy theorists alike, is not to be found within any of his works and is possibly apocryphal. However, there is no denying that the statement does conform to the general tenor of the anti-establishmentarian views espoused by the author and, as such, is central to the Burroughs mythology.

¹⁵⁸ The details concerning Burroughs' particular relation to paranoid beliefs will be dealt with at length presently, but it suffices to further cite the following passage of Hunter S. Thompson's *Better Than Sex*:

This particular accordance with the mechanisms of paranoia is not contrary to the interrogatory impetus that exists in the postmodern American novel. Rather, the recognition of the possibility of certain conspiracies' ^{existence} ~~existence~~ in the world is precipitated precisely by the refusal to allow the critical gaze to stultify into any form of unsceptical socially orthodox position. In the prologue to *Junky*, for example, William S. Burroughs (originally writing under the nom-de-plume William Lee) wrote of how he was drafted into the US army and then discharged, ostensibly for psychological reasons: "They put me down for schizophrenia, adding paranoid type to explain the upsetting fact that I knew where I was and who was President of the US" (Burroughs 1977 c1953, pxiv). Burroughs' statement may appear to be nothing more than a rather dry, off-hand remark; it is actually a terse articulation of the general position of postmodern literature's advocacy of certain paranoid beliefs. That he knew where he was and who was President of the US not only implies that there is a widespread lack of knowledge concerning the place of the individual ('where I am') in regard to the mechanisms of social power ('who the President of the US is'), but also indicates that this attitude is opposed to the normative social position forcibly promulgated by the establishment elite (in this case, the medical establishment) who desire to stifle the 'upsetting fact' (certainly an instance of ironic understatement on Burroughs' behalf) of any such knowledge.

The possibility of the recognition of a legitimate form of paranoia raises a variety of questions that express a sense of epistemological confusion over the definition of 'normative' belief systems. Whilst, for Cornelius Castoriadis "[i]t goes without saying that the construction of the world and the construction of the subject (of one's own self-image) are, for essential reasons, correlative and homologous—as they also are in the case of society" (Castoriadis 1997, p205) this is certainly not the case when considering the conflictive relation of individual paranoid world-creations to those consensual realities of a normative foundation. Because world-creations are given their normative status by popular consensus, an individual's belief system's lack of concordance with normative belief is often identified not only as deviancy, but as madness. In the Burroughs case presented above, for example, it is because of the narrator's avowed lack of agreement with normatively defined belief systems that he is classified as paranoid. The social construction of mental illness in such a fashion has been similarly proposed by psychiatrists such as R.D. Laing, Thomas Szasz, David Cooper and other proponents of the

Confessions of a Political Junkie in order to somewhat contextualise the motivating factors behind his own personal paranoia: "Some people call me paranoid, but *their* names were not on the US Secret Service hot-list of known malcontents, addicts, drinkers, and sworn political enemies with large weapons collections and erratic personal histories including (bogus) allegations of uttering public 'threats' on the life of the President or Vice-President" (Thompson 1995 c1994, p125).

(loosely associated) anti-psychiatry movement.¹⁵⁹ According to Szasz, the person who fails to conform to socio-cultural norms is labelled 'mad', 'insane' or a 'deviant' (this last term particularly accentuating Szasz's understanding of the sociological character of madness) and is demonised and victimised through a series of procedures involving the 'mental health' industry, this process intended to either induce conformity or segregate the individual from society.¹⁶⁰ Despite the existence of certain forms of evidence for specific elements of the anti-psychiatrists' arguments (in that it was not too long ago that doctors were sending single mothers and homosexuals to asylums, for example, or in the explication of ways in which mentally ill individuals are treated with suspicion by general society, thus proving the maxim 'just because you're a paranoid doesn't mean that they aren't out to get you', albeit by redefinition), the anti-psychiatrists' focus upon the social construction of mental illness not only has been criticised for ignoring the possibility of biological factors constituting a determinant factor in mental illness,¹⁶¹ but also has been mocked for betraying its romantic roots in seeing madness as something to be treasured, as a private rebellion against an insane society.¹⁶²

Such a conception of madness as a form of protest against the more repressive mechanisms of society is further presented by Lillian Feder's analysis of the writings of Antonin Artaud. According to Feder:

Antonin Artaud's declaration that delirium is 'as legitimate, as logical, as any other succession of human ideas or acts' is ... a protest against 'the repression of anti-social reactions'. When Artaud asserts that 'madmen are, above all, individual victims of social dictatorship', he implies that madmen's 'internalised systems of symbolisation' must be regarded in relation and opposition to social and political institutions regulating the human mind, which become internalised as prevailing cultural assumptions.
(Feder 1980, p7)

Though Artaud here sees the supposed 'delirium' of the madman to consist in his/her opposition to the prevailing cultural assumptions of society, such opposition is enough to brand him/her a madman and to warrant repression of his/her 'anti-social reactions'. As William Eaton writes, "to be sane in an insane society is a form of insanity itself—a paradox" (Eaton 1980, p192). When taking this view of 'madness' as socially constructed, according to Fried and Agassi:

¹⁵⁹ Most members of the anti-psychiatrist movement targeted their radical revisionist energies upon schizophrenia and the Oedipal complex (the two major, almost monolithic creations of the psychiatric discipline), there was, however, always the definite implication that paranoia, existing as a distinctly defined pathological category (and often seen as being strongly related to schizophrenia) was as much a socially constructed malady as its schizophrenic cousin.

¹⁶⁰ See particularly (Szasz 1970) and (Laing 1976 c1971).

¹⁶¹ This is an entirely valid criticism as far as *causal* factors is concerned, but it does not detract from the significance of the argument that the *praxis*: the lived experience of mental illness, is largely socially constructed.

¹⁶² See, for example, (McCrone 1993, p214-215).

The serious problem arises, that any clinical determination of mental illness would seem to depend *either* on settling the hairy philosophical problem of the criterion of truth, *or* failing that, simply accepting common and received opinion as true without question.
(Fried 1976, pviii)

Fried and Agassi themselves realise that "[p]aranoia is partly psychological and partly sociological" (Fried 1976, p27) and that a totalising view that would take one or the other as the exclusive 'cause' of madness is in error. This recognition of the contingency of paranoia has led many writers not only to reject the dichotomous view of paranoia, but to formulate new ways of viewing the distinction between paranoia and sanity:

The dichotomous view, i.e. that a person either has delusions and hallucinations or does not (rather as a woman is either pregnant or not), has been quashed by Strauss (1969), Chapman and Chapman (1980), and Chapman et al. (1982).... Paranoid processes are on a continuum with daily human functioning; paranoid mechanisms are utilised by everyone.
(Chadwick 1992, p82)

As was demonstrated in the previous section, the works of Thomas Pynchon similarly imply that the paranoid projection of one's concerns and prejudices upon the outer world is a phenomenon intimately intertwined with all world-creations; that paranoid mechanisms are a necessary constituent of any vision of the world (or as Jamer Hunt puts it, "we are all, to varying degrees, paranoiacs; we are all occasionally haunted by the sense that we do not necessarily know the reality that we claim as the anchor of our subjectivity" (Hunt 1999, p28)). When the two poles of 'sanity' and 'insanity' are viewed in a less oppositional fashion, as more akin to socially constructed concepts that are less diametrically opposed than they are the extreme ends of an infinitely divisible spectrum of sanity (a normative-deviant continuum), one begins to view paranoia as more akin to a process or set of practices that anyone ^{might} ~~may~~ (consciously or unconsciously) utilise at a given time. As should be clear, the lack of any transparently absolute distinction between 'paranoid' and 'normal' cognitive processes places in question the possibility of conclusively determining the validity (or lack thereof) of a variety of 'paranoid' beliefs.

A further epistemological issue raised by the possibility of a legitimate mode of paranoia is the potentially uncertain division between actual persecution and unjustified paranoia. In psychologist Andrea Sabbadini's article 'From wounded victims to scarred survivors', the problem of distinguishing between unjustified paranoia and the fear of very real persecution (what is termed the "paranoia of the persecuted") is shown to be complicated by such issues as the possibility of individual psychopathology predating actual persecution; false anxiety arising from post-traumatic stress disorder; massive psychic trauma; and survivor's guilt (Sabbadini 1998). What Sabbadini reveals by focusing on such phenomena is that, whilst certain fears may indeed be technically unjustified, many instances of both individual and mass paranoia are motivated by the evidence of past instances of actual persecution. As J. Frosch writes: "It is now widely understood that

many paranoid patients have been hurt, traumatised, humiliated, or, in other words, persecuted in their early years of life" (Frosch 1990, p4). One might take issue with Frosch's delimitation of the onset of such phenomena to the 'early years of life', for persecution occurring at any stage of life may imbue one with markedly paranoid tendencies. Calvin C. Hernton's account of the historical development of African-Americans' understandable fear of police (particularly those living in the South) detailed in his deeply personal essay 'Between history and me: persecution paranoia and the police' attests to the fact that such fears may sometimes develop after many years of subjection to systematised forms of oppression. However, such concessions to Frosch's argument only strengthen his thesis that paranoia ^{might} ~~may~~, at times, be legitimately said to arise from instances of actual persecution.

Broadly stated, the distinction between unjustified paranoia and actual persecution may be seen to lie in the notion of 'narcissistic referentiality': the paranoiac's belief that there are plots malevolently directed against him or her as a specific individual, rather than against a certain group of people who are persecuted on racial, political or religious grounds.¹⁶³ The potential slipperiness of such a distinction is evidenced by Joseph Heller's World War II novel, *Catch-22*, when the novel's protagonist, Yossarian, explicates in a conversation with a fellow soldier named Clevinger the reason for his personal paranoia:

'They're trying to kill me,' Yossarian told him calmly.
 'No one's trying to kill you,' Clevinger cried.
 'Then why are they shooting at me?' Yossarian asked.
 'They're shooting at *everyone*,' Clevinger answered. 'They're trying to kill everyone.'
 'And what difference does that make?'
 (Heller 1969 c1961, p23)

In response to Yossarian's rhetorical question, the 'difference' that it makes is essentially one of reference. Despite Yossarian's "proof" to the contrary (that "strangers he didn't know shot at him with cannons every time he flew up into the air to drop bombs on them" (Heller 1969 c1961, p23-24)) he has not been singled out for persecution. Rather, Yossarian's paranoia is an understandable (if somewhat logically misdirected) response to a dangerous (and only metaphorically persecutory) situation. This is once again demonstrated when the paranoid Yossarian responds in a similarly confused fashion to the poisoning of his squad's food :

'Nobody's trying to poison you.'
 'They poisoned my food twice didn't they . . .'
 'They put poison in *everybody's* food,' Clevinger explained.
 'And what difference does *that* make?'

¹⁶³ This is a vein of argument that is broadly hinted at by psychoanalyst Salomon Resnick in his essay 'Being in a persecutory world: The construction of a world model and its distortions' (Resnick 1998) and by Andrea Sabbadini's report on her activities in the position of psychotherapist for the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, 'From wounded victims to scarred survivors' (Sabbadini 1998).

(Heller 1969 c1961, p26)

Despite the humour present in Yossarian's paranoid reflexes to unnerving situations, the point is made that 'They' *are* trying to kill him. However, the critical intent of the novel differs markedly from Yossarian's elucidation of the situation. 'They' are shown to be trying to kill almost everyone, not Yossarian in particular. The problem of confused reference is further raised by the question of the identity of the ubiquitous 'They':

'Who's they?' he wanted to know. 'Who, specifically, do you think is trying to kill you?'

'Every one of them,' Yossarian told him.

'Every one of whom?'

'Every one of whom do you think?'

'I haven't any idea.'

'Then how do you know they aren't?'

(Heller 1969 c1961, p24)

Yossarian has no idea who 'They' are (and, indeed, exhibits no aspiration to find out), but the novel proposes likely candidates by presenting characters who self-servingly ignore the concerns of others in directing the action of the war for their own personal ends. Milo Minderbinder, for example, whose wartime cartel forms a trade allegiance with Germany that leads to his own unit's being bombed (Heller 1969 c1961, p166), or Captain Black, who falsely accuses Major Major (amongst many others) of being a communist in order to further his own dreams of military power (Heller 1969 c1961, p124-129). Put simply, 'They' are both those who lead Yossarian's army and the unscrupulous individuals who profit from it. The conspiracies posited by *Catch-22* thus do not coincide with the paranoid beliefs of Yossarian.

Somewhat similar to the situation presented by *Catch-22*, Steffen Hantke notes that DeLillo's *White Noise* "allow[s] for an ambiguous coexistence of paranoia as the mental condition of the narrator, and the possibility that some conspiracies do, in fact exist, even if they are not necessarily identical with the narrator's specific suspicions" (Hantke 1994, p39). Jack Gladney suffers from an ambiguously defined paranoid fear of death, and the novel answers his fear by proposing the reality of certain technological dangers of the late-twentieth-century, such as low-level radiation of the kind emitted from electrical wires and VDT terminals, toxic chemical spills, and so on.

The distinction between the views espoused by certain characters within novels and the concerns that the novels themselves attest ^{might} to ~~may~~, at times, be fine, but it is a crucial distinction. The contrast between Yossarian's paranoid belief in faceless persecutors and the novel's criticism of those responsible for directing the war serves in shifting the dramatic weight of Yossarian's horrific wartime experiences toward a criticism of bloodthirsty generals and greedy warmongers. Thus, Yossarian's general and undirected paranoid feelings are, in a certain fashion, legitimated by the novel's exposure of the

'conspiracy' of war, an exposure that contradicts a normative understanding of war and, importantly, of the term 'conspiracy' itself.

As the above examples imply, epistemological confusion with regard to the question of the validity of paranoid beliefs may also arise because history is literally riddled with actual occurrences of conspiracy. While even the briefest survey of conspiracy theories is sufficient to demonstrate their historical ubiquity, and they have been demonstrated to gain greater popular credence in times of social confusion.¹⁶⁴ As Myanna Lahsen writes: "Charges and suggestions of conspiracy spread with little resistance among sympathetic audiences in a social ... context characterised by uncertainty, fragmentation, complexity, and competing interests; who was who, and who said or provoked what and with what authority and expertise, is not always easily established" (Lahsen 1999, p133). Lahsen construes the conspiracy theories of the paranoiac as: "rhetorical means by which to cast suspicion on ... political opponents; they constitute one tactic among many at play between competing interests and views concerning what kind of society and future is wanted, a ... strategy by which to advance interests" (Lahsen 1999, p133-134). Many postmodern novels narratively portray a variety of instances of actual conspiracies in such a fashion, primarily in order to undermine the normatively accepted belief that established official social and economic powers do not conspire against the interests of the individual. *Gravity's Rainbow*, for example, describes the conflicting affiliations between national oil and chemical companies (such as I.G. Farben, Shell and ICI) and warring nations, alluding to an overabundance of conspiratorial corporate activities that have long been established as having taken place during World War II. In one particular section of the novel, as Slothrop ponders the conspiracy that he believes to be directed against himself, the narrative presentation of the scene contains an oblique allusion to the many secret cartel connections made by oil companies during the war:

Stray visitors are observed now along the still-forbidden beach, sitting among obsolescent networks of steel and cable, ... Just offshore, underwater, run miles of secret piping, oil ready at a valve-twist to be released ... (GR, p237)

As the passage proceeds, the novel's allusion to the conspiratorial dealings conducted by these companies becomes even more complex. Slothrop becomes involved in a conversation with a Shell research employee (who, importantly, wears a medal from German chemical company I.G. Farben) who informs him that, despite Shell's traditional association with the Allies ("It seems that early in 1941, the British Ministry of Supply let a £10,000 research contract to Shell—wanted Shell to develop a rocket engine that would run on something besides cordite" (GR, p240)) it had been involved in secret dealings with the Germans:

¹⁶⁴ See particularly (Cohn 1970 c1957, p73-74).

'Are you blokes *aware*, ... that Jerry—old Jerry, you know—has been *in* that The Hague [where Shell conducted its production and refining research] there, shooting his bloody rockets at that London, a-and *using*, the Royal Dutch Shell headquarters *building*, at the Josef Israelplein if I remember correctly, for a radio *guidance* transmitter?'
(GR, p240-241)

It is Slothrop who makes the connection: "'doesn't it strike you as just a bit odd, you Shell chaps working on *your* liquid engine *your* side of the Channel you know, and *their* chaps firing their bloody things at you with your own ... Shell transmitter tower, you see'" (GR, p241). *Gravity's Rainbow* repeatedly interrogates the practices of impersonal corporate entities "with no real country, no side in any war, no specific face or heritage: tapping instead out of that global stratum, most deeply laid, from which all the appearances of corporate ownership really spring" (GR, p243) presenting the argument that, in the late-twentieth-century, it is the tangled web of Machiavellian double-dealings of the corporation that constitutes the main threat to the freedom of the individual. A slightly more specific example of official powers conspiring against the interests of the individual appears in *The Crying of Lot 49*, when Oedipa's psychotherapist Dr. Hilarius is said to be involved in: "an experiment he was helping the community hospital run on effects of LSD-25, mescaline, psilocybin, and related drugs on a large sample of suburban housewives" (L49, p10), alluding to the many governmentally operated drug experimentation projects known to have been conducted during the 1950s and 1960s, often using unwitting or unwilling individuals as guinea pigs.¹⁶⁵ In such instances, the relentless suspicion of official sources of knowledge that marks the mental processes of the paranoid is deployed by the postmodern novel in order to question 'official' sources of knowledge, undermining the validity of the normative belief systems seen to be founded on these official bases of knowledge.

The inevitable problem that arises with the recognition that history does include actual instances of conspiracy hinges on the definition of the term 'conspiracy'. Examples of actual conspiracies can range from those (such as the secret wartime associations of companies such as Shell and I.G. Farben, or the governmental drug testing carried out by the American government during the 50s and 60s) that might be dismissed as practices currently defined as the symptoms characteristic of an unenlightened age, indicative of the normal practices of the time in which they took place (so that the broader connotations and wider implications of the term 'conspiracy' seem to be unduly evoked), to those that refer to phenomena so disparately organised and wide-ranging in their effects that, once again, the term 'conspiracy' may no longer seem appropriate. In contrast to the directed significance of the above cases, for example, are the more lateral concerns presented by "the Mother Conspiracy" detailed by Otto Gnahn in *Gravity's Rainbow*. During a narrative presentation of the conspiratorial machinations and double-dealing espionage of the

¹⁶⁵ See particularly (Stevens 1993 c1987) (Marks 1979) (1966a) (1966b).

Second World War that proliferates beyond the capacity of even the most attentive reader to untangle, the young Otto, confounded and frustrated by his overbearing mother, explains his beliefs in a passage worth recounting in full for both its humour and its underlying insinuations:

Otto is earnestly explaining his views on the Mother Conspiracy. It's not often a sympathetic girl will listen. The Mothers get together once a year, in secret, at these giant conventions, and exchange information. Recipes, games, key phrases to use on their children. 'What did yours use to say when she wanted you to feel guilty?'

"I've worked my fingers to the bone!" sez the girl.

'Right! And she used to cook those horrible casseroles, w-with the potatoes, and onions—'

'And ham, little pieces of ham—'

'You see, you see? That can't be accidental! They have a contest, for Mother of the Year, breast-feeding, diaper-changing, they *time* them, casserole competitions, ja—then, toward the end, they actually begin to use the *children*. The State Prosecutor comes out on stage. "In a moment, Albrecht, we are going to bring your mother on. Here is a Luger, fully loaded. The State will guarantee you absolute immunity from prosecution. Do whatever you wish to do—anything at all. Good luck, my boy". The pistols are loaded with blanks, natürlich, but the unfortunate child does not know this. Only the mothers who get shot at qualify for the finals. Here they bring in psychiatrists, and judges sit with stop-watches to see how quickly the children will crack. "Now then, Olga, wasn't it *nice* of Mutti to break up your affair with that long-haired poet?" "We understand that your mother and you are, ah, *quite close*, Hermann. Remember the time she caught you *masturbating into her glove*? Eh?" Hospital attendants stand by to drag the children off, drooling, screaming, having clonic convulsions. Finally there is one mother left on stage.'

(GR, p505)

Though it would certainly be foolish to accede to Otto's belief in the 'Mother of the Year' contest, the concerns raised by the above passage obliquely allude to more general aspects of the child-parent relationship. Apart from constituting a recognition of the detrimental effect of over-controlling parental relations, the overtly sexual concerns raised by the above passage allude to the Oedipal relationship and its potentially destructive effect on the mental health of children, particularly when the evolution of healthy sexual instincts is perverted by the parental repression to be commonly found in the nuclear family. *Gravity's Rainbow* contains numerous allusions to the conspiratorial nature of the nuclear family. Slothrop, for example, believes himself to be a victim of 'the Father Conspiracy':

... there is a villain here, serious as death. It is this typical American teenager's own *Father*, trying episode after episode to kill his son. And the kid knows it. Imagine that. So far he's managed to escape his father's daily little death-plots—but nobody has said he has to *keep* escaping.

(GR, p674)

According to Scott Sanders, Slothrop fears a 'Father Conspiracy' because he actually has been the victim of one, Slothrop's father volunteering him as an infant subject for psychological experiments conducted by Laszlo Jampf (an ongoing ordeal from which he has never fully escaped). As Sanders writes: "In this instance, Slothrop is not so much paranoid as perceptive" (Sanders 1976, p143). However, within the novel itself, it is

impossible to either assert or deny conclusively that this is the case.¹⁶⁶ With regard to both 'the Mother Conspiracy' and 'the Father Conspiracy', it is the potentially deleterious effects of certain forms of parental relationships that are foregrounded.

Despite the fact that the tentative and often tenuous epistemological status of norms complicates the distinction between definitions of unjustified paranoia and of actual conspiracy, even the briefest survey of recently published critical works that investigate the contemporary upsurge of widespread paranoia and conspiracy theories suffices to demonstrate that their overwhelming response to these phenomena is an instinctively derogatory attitude, coupled with dismissals of all unconventional claims. This is a position that often belies an uncritical acceptance of normative conceptions of the sociopolitical arena. *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred*, the 1997 work of political psychologist Robert S. Robins and psychiatrist Jerrold M. Post, for example, limits its subject matter to the paranoia to be found in the annals of political history, in particular, the phenomenon of mass paranoia instigated by powerful political leaders such as Hitler, Stalin, Idi Amin, and Pol Pot (a phenomenon that they characterise as belonging to the broadly termed category 'genocidal paranoia' (Robins 1997, p66)). And although many of the arguments presented in support of the book's aim to examine the role that the paranoid outlook has played in the adversarial realm of politics are entirely valid (if not exactly novel), the authors' close ties to official US policy-making organisations constitute, at least potentially, a case of gross political bias. As Richard Webster's review of the book argues:

Robert S. Robins is a political scientist who has served as a consultant in political psychology to several presidential administrations in the United States, while Jerrold M. Post is the psychiatrist who founded the US Government's Centre for the Analysis of Personality and Political Behaviour. Published by Yale University Press and endorsed on its back cover by the President of the American Psychiatric Association, this book might as well come in a US diplomatic bag. (Webster 1998, p27)

Politically motivated bias is indeed evident in the chosen subject matter of the book. Despite the inclusion of a ^{paltry, minimal} number of examples of American political paranoia (there are just four pages that provide the most basic précis of 'The Communist Witch Hunt'), the vast majority of examples provided by Robins and Post are represented by the traditional enemies of American foreign and domestic relations. The book actually reinforces the folk-devil status of such 'anti-American' ideologies as communism and, most notably, Islam and the Arab Nationalist movement. The chapter entitled 'Killing in the Name of God' quotes only the most unflattering surahs of the Qur'an and certain emotive

¹⁶⁶ As Alec McHoul and David Willis rightly remark, "In every case we face indeterminacies of this kind. The narrative refuses to be stitched together as a whole cloth out of the wefts and wafts of the characters" (Willis 1990, p32). According to McHoul and Willis, an 'empirical reading' of *Gravity's Rainbow*, "with readers having to reconstruct what 'really' happened from what a character dreamed, hallucinated, etc" is an inadequate approach to a text that is fundamentally concerned with challenging the distinction between 'individual fantasy' and 'objective reality' (Willis 1990, p49).

speeches of Arabic political leaders in an attempt to demonstrate the fundamentally dangerous nature of Islam, largely ignoring equally repellent sections of The Bible.¹⁶⁷ This lengthy chapter reads almost like a wholesale condemnation of the entire Islamic faith as a violently oppressive paranoid regime, with subsections entitled 'Killing in the Name of Allah', 'Ayatollah Khomeini and Radical Shi'ite Islam', 'Hezbollah', 'Sunni Doctrine and Killing in the Name of God' and 'Hamas'. In a section of the book that is devoted to detailing the atrocities committed by the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, the fact that Arabic countries provided economic aid to Uganda and that Amin was an adherent of Islam (part of a 6% Islamic minority in Uganda) are stressed beyond their actual significance. Examination of the phenomenon of Christian Fundamentalism, on the other hand, is limited to around six pages (around the same amount of space that is devoted to a descriptive analysis of Sikhism) of well-worn horror stories concerning the Crusades and a brief mention of the anti-abortion movement. A greater degree of analysis occurs, in fact, in detailing the activities of cults such as the Aum Supreme Truth group led by Japanese Shoko Asahara and the followers of Jim Jones, but primarily focusing more on inter-American groups such as David Koresh's Branch Davidians, groups whose beliefs are defined as deviantly opposed to the brand of institutionalised Christian faith authorised by the United States establishment. Yet another domestic threat identified by the book as dangerously paranoid is the Militia Movement, blamed as an entity for the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing incident and rampant racism. It is true that certain individual American militia groups may have right-wing orientations and connections with racist organisations such as the Ku Klux Klan; this by no means applies to the entirety of the Militia Movement.

Just as *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred* appeals to the sort of mindset that is intent on indiscriminately demonising any form of perceived deviancy from socio-political norms, Elaine Showalter's *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* suffers from an uncritical opposition to claims that run contra to broadly defined established ideas. Showalter's book taps into popular events that, for the most part, are not overtly political in the same manner as those analysed by Robins and Post, but that are fiercely publicly contested nevertheless. After a long survey of the history of hysteria and its analysis, Showalter presents a series of case studies of contemporary 'epidemics' of hysteria in which patients turn to conspiratorial explanations for what Showalter insists are psychological disturbances.

Grouping a diverse variety of seemingly disparate phenomena together under the broad, and unmistakably provocative, rubric of hysteria allows Showalter to make some interesting connections between, for example, the historical use and abuse of hypnotism and "recovered memory syndrome" potentially involved in a great number of stories of

¹⁶⁷ See (Robins 1997, pp141, 147, 152, 157-158).

sexual abuse, satanic ritual abuse and alien abduction,¹⁶⁸ but this category is simply too broad to be uncritically applied to everything that appears vaguely 'paranoid'. As Peter Knight and Alasdair Spark remark, this method of proceeding leads to certain uneasy connections, such as is evident in "a case like Gulf War syndrome, in which the jury is still out, linked [by Showalter] to the long-disproven claims of the recovered memory movement" (Knight 1998, p22). As Knight and Spark continue:

Showalter's claim that conspiracy-minded fears are a hysterical manifestation of the believer's unconscious desires or shameful fantasies is at times unconvincing, even with her insistence that mental suffering is as serious and real as physical disease. Far from being a projection on to the outside world of repressed inner conflicts, much contemporary conspiracy culture might instead be understood as an attempt to make sense, albeit in a distorted fashion, of some of the deeper conflicts that reside not in the psyche but in society. We might be better off looking for inner demons in the Pentagon than in people's minds.
(Knight 1998, p22)

Far from looking for the potential metaphorical significance of conspiratorial fears, Showalter writes from a distinctively essentialist methodological position, appealing to 'evidence' and 'rational' grounds for the verification of 'Truth' in order to renounce the fallacious and threatening beliefs of menacing deviants. However, she also avoids the question of what constitutes valid evidence. Whilst a multifarious array of conspiracy theorists may produce reams of documentation as 'evidence' confirming the authenticity of their particular beliefs, Showalter's unstated definition of evidence as delimited to the data provided by official sources of knowledge (such as the medical and psychiatric establishments) that corroborates conventional attitudes, denies the recognition of potential alternative sources of evidence. The epistemological crisis which to a large degree prompts postmodern paranoia remains unaddressed. Thus, the problem of discerning the relative veracity of conflicting evidence from divergent sources is avoided through an unquestioned reliance upon an unstated conviction in the accuracy of normative belief systems. The assumptions underlying Showalter's mode of argument thus assign it a certain circularity: 'evidence' that confirms normative views of reality is accepted as valid because it confirms the norm; 'evidence' that threatens to controvert the norm is rejected because it lacks a normative foundation. Because the conspiracy theory operates primarily in questioning the validity of a gamut of normative assumptions, reliance upon these normative assumptions in order to deflate such theories fails to constitute a satisfactory response.

In contrast to *Hystories* and *Political Paranoia*, Jodi Dean's 1998 book *Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures from Outerspace to Cyberspace* recognises that conspiracy theories are a phenomenon that expresses a fundamental conflict with the normative bias of what is claimed as 'consensus reality' or 'common sense'. As Dean writes:

¹⁶⁸ See (Showalter 1997, p144-158).

Insofar as its practitioners can link together varieties of disparate phenomena to find patterns of denial, occlusion, and manipulation, conspiracy theory, far from a label dismissively attached to the lunatic fringe, may well be an appropriate vehicle for political contestation.
(Dean 1998, p8)

Thus paranoia may come to representatively express certain forms of dissension that occur within society, articulating its anxieties and suspicions. As Knight and Spark remark, according to Dean, certain conspiracy theories offer a way of "thinking about and registering an unfocused protest against the collusion of the military-industrial-scientific complex: trust no one, least of all the authorities" (Knight 1998, p22). Evidence in support of this opinion is easily recognisable. In the popular media, contemporary films such as *JFK*, *Enemy of the State*, *Men In Black* and *Conspiracy Theory*, and television programs such as *The X-Files*, *Invasion America* and *Millennium* all express (albeit often rather simplistically) a pervasive sense of discontent¹⁶⁹ and distrust of government.¹⁶⁹ Dean has

¹⁶⁹ The major transformation in the mode of paranoia that occurred in the historical shift from the early Cold War to the postmodern era was a switch in the identity of the 'enemy' from subversive saboteur to official power. This is evident even in many of the popular cultural representations of the two eras. The most cited example of popular culture's preoccupation with the paranoia of the early Cold War is Don Siegel's 1956 science-fiction/horror movie *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, in which the small Californian town of Santa Mira is taken over by large alien seed pods that replicate and replace its inhabitants, turning them into loveless conformists and emotionless drones. The particular pertinence of the horror genre to social fears of maliciously invasive Otherness is also exhibited by William Peter Blatty's 1971 novel *The Exorcist*, the basis for the popular horror film of the same name. Although the novel's literal focus is the possession of an American by a demonically alien force (the novel's conscious expression of ambiguity over whether the symptoms of possession in this case are the result of actual demonic possession or of mental illness is notable, but not particularly significant in this respect, for both are forms of internal disorder that the novel sees as arising from outside forces) the novel also symbolically associates this individual possession with such socially alien and metaphorically possessive demonic forces as Nazism, the Mob, communism, satanism, the Vietnam War, the decline of the American family, and drug-addiction. See particularly (Blatty 1971, pp7, 186, 236). The novel's prologue details the exorcist Father Merrin's initial dealings with a devil in the overtly foreign locale of Northern Iraq, implying that the source of evil is foreign, but it is in the first chapter of the novel proper that the scene of the possession is the political heart of American, Washington D.C., is emphasised (Blatty 1971, p21). As the blurb on the back-cover of the novel implies, "the Devil is here" both privately, "in the body of this all-American child", and publicly, "in Washington D.C." Of primary significance with regards to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, however, is the fact that these alien replicas are physically indistinguishable from their human originators, symbolically expressing the American populace's fear of the malevolent spread of the secretive forces of communism. In contrast, without a doubt the most popular and influential representative of postmodern paranoia is the television show *The X-Files*, in which renegade FBI agents Fox Mulder and his sidekick Dana Scully battle against a high-level conspiracy to conceal government contact and co-operation with malicious extraterrestrial forces. Here it is official American power that is in league with the malignant aliens. Examples of contemporary films which posit the existence of conspiratorial governmental regimes are more than widespread. In *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, Fredric Jameson extensively analyses the "paranoia trilogy" of director Alan Pakula: the 1971 movie about covert underworld intrigues, *Klute*; *The Parallax View* of 1974, which, according to Jameson, "takes its premise that famous rumour about the deaths in mysterious circumstances of a high and statistically improbable number of eye-witnesses in the years following the Kennedy assassination" (Jameson 1992a, p55); and the 1976 treatment of Woodward's and Bernstein's uncovering of the Watergate scandal detailed by *All The President's Men*. See (Jameson 1992a, p45-84). Also prominent are the films of American director Oliver Stone, from his 1991 film *JFK*, which explained the assassination of John F. Kennedy as the result of a government conspiracy

attracted valid criticism for her exaggerated belief in the ability of a skeptical stance towards the political establishment to constitute a form of healthy populist dissent, but she is nevertheless partly correct in her blunt assertion that "[c]onspiracy theory is everyday politics" (Dean 1998, p14). It is precisely because of this assertion that Dean's book has been widely criticised by certain reviewers who fear the invasion of academia by the alien forces of cultural studies. Frederick Crews's unmistakably hostile review of *Aliens in America*, printed in the June edition of the New York Review of Books, unflatteringly groups the publication with a variety of distinctly unacademic works (such as David M. Jacobs's *The Threat*, and the latest work of infamous alien abduction guru Whitley Strieber, *Confirmation: The Hard Evidence of Aliens Among Us*) under the sarcastic title "The Mindsnatchers". After indulging in a four-page diatribe against the deplorable insanity of those who believe in the existence of extraterrestrial life, Crews zealously launches into a fervent censure of the book that focuses criticism more on the author's political and academic persuasions than on its actual content. Indeed the question of the value of the content of the book is not even broached by Crews, who prefers to limit his criticism to personal denigration, remarking that "Dean rushes to embrace paranoia itself on political grounds" (Crews 1998, p19):

Dean ... here wields the current idiom of poststructuralism and postmodernism in a way that must have favourably impressed peer evaluators and the staff of Cornell University Press. Yet if *Aliens in America* is a mainstream work, the mainstream has become a turbid meander. The problem is not the author's hospitality, per se, to the alien abduction hypothesis ... But indifference itself—a studied refusal to acknowledge any criteria of judgement except sheer subversiveness toward an imagined establishment—is precisely the scandal here. (Crews 1998, p18)

As should be clear, the criticisms lodged at Dean's arguments arise from an unmistakably normative bias, a reliance on conventional belief systems that fails to question the assumptions upon which its dismissals of unconventional claims are founded.

Apart from previous arguments problematising the normative position against 'paranoia', one might turn to the phenomena of heavily documented examples of widespread beliefs that are antagonistic to the centrality of supposedly normative belief systems. Such are represented by a 1997 Time/CNN poll that concluded that sixty-four percent of Americans believe that creatures from another planet have recently been in touch with human beings.¹⁷⁰ The 'normative' status of the position that argues against the existence of aliens

that incorporated such cabalistic alien forces as the Mob and anti-Castro Cuban political exiles, to his 1995 movie *Nixon*, which examined the Watergate affair with a similar eye for official conspiracy and cover-up. On this topic, see also (Riley 1981).

¹⁷⁰ See "Poll: U.S. Hiding Knowledge of Aliens" CNN Interactive (June 15, 1997), <http://www.cnn.com/US/9706/15/ufo.poll/index.html>. Among the believers, roughly half also subscribe to the idea of alien abduction. The connection (unstated above) between belief in UFOs/extraterrestrial contact and paranoia/conspiracy theory is neatly summarised by English journalist Tom Hodgkinson:

is here placed in doubt by the possibility that it may be a norm defined by an increasingly shrinking minority of adherents, a somewhat shaky definition at best. Even if one doubts that the possible existence of aliens is a debate worth entering into at all, the issue of competing norms that it raises is by no means easily dismissed. Further complicating matters is the fact that, while many extraordinary (and extra-normative) claims may be confidently discredited as erroneous, this does not and cannot deny the significance of the fact that such claims are made at all. As Eric Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda write about the numerous claims of satanic ritual abuse reported in America:

To individuals with a certain kind of background living in certain life circumstances, the fear appears to be based on concrete events, the story on which the fears are based appears to be true because of events that are really happening that, to them, very much *represent* events that happen in the story.... In the eyes of many traditionalists, there has been a virtual explosion of drug use, pornography, teenage sex, abortion, crime and delinquency, and non- and anti- Christian cultures. The nation is wallowing in filth, corruption, and depravity, some feel. Many traditionalists feel that they are witnessing the death throes of a once-viable, meaningful, and worthwhile way of life that stood at the centre of their existence. It is the decline of that which is regarded as good and the recent, immense growth of that which is regarded as evil, that convinces many fundamentalist Christians that the satanism tale must be true and that it is a cause for serious concern for the country as a whole.
(Goode 1994, p61)

Thus paranoid claims may have a certain status as obliquely expressing the metaphorical truth of a claimant's situation, even if the claim in itself is demonstrated to be empirically false.¹⁷¹

Whilst Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick does acknowledge that, "for someone to have an unmystified, angry view of large and genuinely systemic oppressions does not *intrinsically* or *necessarily* enjoin on that person any specific train of epistemological or narrative consequence", she recognises as the motivating factor behind many forms of paranoid belief the fact that "[i]n a world where no one need be delusional to find evidence of systemic oppression, to theorise out of anything *but* a paranoid critical stance has come to seem naïve, pious, or complaisant" (Sedgwick 1997, p4-5). Sedgwick's use of the term 'paranoid critical stance' denotes a distinct understanding of 'paranoia' that differs from the

"[T]alk among ufologists is inevitably peppered with references to cover-ups, to notions of us and them. The alien is co-opted as an ally against hostile leaders" (Hodgkinson 1995).

¹⁷¹ A similar notion is expressed by Michael A. Aquino's article entitled 'Paranoia: Virtue Under Siege', published in the American based magazine *Paranoia*. As Aquino remarks on the prevalence of conspiracy theories, "Perhaps most dehumanising about this situation is that there is *no* deliberate conspiracy targeting us, but rather a random, continuing disintegration of whatever social ideas we at least imagine must have existed somewhere" (Aquino 1998, p31). Aquino argues that certain paranoid claims may express the fear that there is no consistently ^{logical} form of social organisation, that conspiratorial claims may be metaphorically true in articulating a sense of anxiety over the fact that, empirically, there is 'no conspiracy'.

way in which the term has been used in earlier sections of this thesis. In order to elaborate upon this important distinction, it is useful to turn to the categorisation of different forms of paranoia outlined by Tony Elias (Elias 1998). According to Elias, contemporary academic analyses of 'paranoia' can be seen as driving at three distinct forms of understanding of the term. The first, and most obvious, use of 'paranoia' involves understanding the phenomenon to designate a particular form of mental illness diagnosed by psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychotherapists as a clinical ailment, an understanding to which Elias designates the term 'pathological paranoia'. The second form of paranoia, which Elias terms 'despotic paranoia', refers to what Robins and Post describe as 'genocidal paranoia': the phenomenon analysed in former sections of this thesis as 'mass paranoia'. However, it is the third form of paranoia, what Elias terms the 'critical paranoid mode' (which may be identified as the conceptual entity that Sedgwick refers to as the 'paranoid critical stance') that concerns us here. There are major distinctions between this paranoid critical stance and previously examined notions of paranoia as the projective substitution of a rigorous conspiratorial order for the alienating chaos of the postmodern world, a conception of paranoia closer to Elias's categorisations of 'pathological paranoia' and 'despotic paranoia'. Though earlier analyses of postmodern novels' presentations of paranoia have demonstrated that paranoia is seen to be involved in the process of projectively tracing power to a distinct origin and an evil presence, personalising and allegorising conflict, and thereby structuring, familiarising and naturalising the simplistic Manichean logic of 'us versus them', the critical paranoid mode is diametrically opposed to such projects. Articulating an understanding of paranoia that is similar to the paranoid critical stance, Steffen Hantke maintains that the primary function of the 'conspiracy fiction' of postmodern writers such as Don DeLillo and James McElroy is to deploy a form of 'defamiliarisation': the process of problematising normative assumptions, familiarly known and unquestioned due to their 'natural' status, and thereby revealing their socio-political functions¹⁷²: "[C]onspiracy fiction undermines society's master-narratives by casting doubts upon the objectivity and integrity of those in power, as well as defamiliarising the ideological agenda they administer and the political system that has given them access to their privileged positions" (Hantke 1994, p12). The works to be examined here (which Hantke places under the broad rubric of 'conspiracy fiction') may be seen as operating through the advocacy of a certain form of paranoid critical stance. In Hantke's words, [conspiracy fiction] "attempts to undermine and subvert the unchallenged assumptions of these theories, expose their political objectives for what they are, and reflect the role they play in the complex networks of cultural and social practices" (Hantke 1994, p133). The paranoid critical stance does not, therefore, indulge in any form of instating a lost sense of order (particularly in the way in which earlier analyses of paranoid world-creation have shown this as being the case). Rather, it aims at deconstructing both the

¹⁷² The notion of 'defamiliarisation' has been popularised by certain works of critic Roland Barthes, but its roots lie in Russian Formalism. See particularly (Barthes 1985) (Jameson 1972) (Pavel 1988).

means used to accomplish this goal and the motivations behind the attempt. Thus, the postmodern American novel utilises the paranoid critical stance as a strategic deployment of defamiliarisation in order to expose what might be termed 'conspiracies of naturalisation'. This particular comprehension of the paranoid critical stance holds notable affinities with Paul Ricoeur's concept of the 'hermeneutics of suspicion'. As Jean Grondin explains: "This is a phrase coined by Paul Ricoeur to characterise the interpretative strategy that distrusts immediate meaning, tracing it back to an unconscious will to power. Along with Nietzsche as representatives of the hermeneutics of suspicion, Ricoeur names Freud, who reduces meaning to unconscious drives, and Marx, who linked it to class interests" (Grondin 1994 c1991, p15).¹⁷³ According to Ricoeur's analysis:

For Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, the fundamental category of consciousness is the relation hidden-shown or, if you prefer, simulated-manifested.... Thus the distinguishing characteristic of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche is the general hypothesis concerning both the process of false consciousness and the method of deciphering. The two go together, since the man of suspicion carries out in reverse the work of falsification of the man of guile.... Fundamentally, the *Genealogy of Morals* in Nietzsche's sense, the theory of ideologies in the Marxist sense, and the theory of ideals and illusions in Freud's sense represent three convergent procedures of demystification. (Ricoeur 1970, p33-34)

In her essay 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading', Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick remarks that "the very productive critical habits embodied in what Paul Ricoeur memorably called the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' are "perhaps by now nearly synonymous with criticism itself" (Sedgwick 1997, p4). The relevant connections between the hermeneutics of suspicion, contemporary methods of critique, and paranoia are also traced at length in Sedgwick's essay. Just as Ricoeur insists upon the efficacy of the "revelation" of meaning" through interrelated methods of "demystifying hermeneutics" in order to reveal the false consciousness instilled by ideology (Ricoeur 1970, p32-33) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues for the importance of realising the similar tendencies of paranoia:

Whatever account it might give of its own motivation, paranoia is ^{characterised} ~~placed~~ by placing, in practice, an extraordinary stress on the efficacy of knowledge per se—knowledge in the form of exposure. Maybe that's why paranoid knowing is so inescapably narrative. Like the deinstitutionalised person on the street who, betrayed and plotted against by everyone else on the city, still urges on you the finger-worm dossier bristling with his precious correspondence, paranoia for all its vaunted suspicion acts as though its work would be accomplished if only it could finally, this time, somehow get its story truly known. (Sedgwick 1997, p17)¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Denis Savage's interpretation of the pertinent section of Ricoeur's *Freud and Philosophy*, 'Interpretation as Exercise of Suspicion', although failing to mention the term 'the hermeneutics of suspicion', places the practices of Freud, Marx and Nietzsche under the headings of "the school of suspicion" and "the masters of suspicion" (Ricoeur 1970, p32-36).

¹⁷⁴ Sedgwick's incredulity toward the belief in the efficacy of exposure is patent in the above citation, but she does acknowledge (if somewhat grudgingly) that "[s]ome exposés, some demystifications, some bearings of witness do have great effectual force (though often of an unanticipated kind)" (Sedgwick 1997, p19).

However, the key to an understanding of the common features of both the hermeneutics of suspicion and the paranoid critical stance lies in a particular understanding of ideology. According to Raymond Williams's *Marxism and Literature*, understandings of the concept of ideology have traditionally suffered from a difficulty in distinguishing between three common versions of the concept, these being:

- (i) a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group;
 - (ii) a system of illusory beliefs—false ideas or false consciousness—which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge;
 - (iii) the general process of the production of meanings and ideas.
- (Williams 1977, p55)

The second sense of ideology mentioned by Williams is the most relevant to the paranoid critical stance of a variety of postmodern novels. The project of ideological criticism undertaken as part of the paranoid critical stance implicates itself in what Williams describes as the "sense of getting free of the ordinary assumptions of social inquiry" in order to examine "the 'assumptions, concepts, and points of view', whether received or not, by which any knowledge has been gained and organised", and to provide "an indication of the received assumptions, concepts, and points of view which can be shown to prevent or distort such detailed and connected knowledge" (Williams 1977, p63-64). Whilst Williams is right in pointing out that this project often seems to be driven by the belief "that others are biased but that, by definition, we are not" (Williams 1977, p64) the motivation for the postmodern novel's deployment of the paranoid critical stance is the desire to reveal and critique the ideologically driven inequalities hidden by the 'natural' status of the received social order. Such a view is articulated by Karl Mannheim's terse statement on the nature of ideology:

The concept 'ideology' reflects the ... discovery that ruling groups can in their thinking become so intensively interest-bound to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination. There is implicit in the word 'ideology' the insight that in certain situations the collective unconscious of certain groups obscures the real situation of society both to itself and to others, and thereby stabilises it.

(Mannheim 1936, p40)

William Eaton argues that ideological legitimisation is necessary to the maintenance of any institutional order: "[S]ocial order and stability derive from a constant process of legitimisation and universe maintenance, and acts that threaten the process are deviant" (Eaton 1980, p19). Through recognition that social orders are ideologically driven, and that they are often involved in acts of systemic oppression, the paranoid critical stance of many postmodern novels aims to disrupt the established order by providing a series of delegitimising critiques.

Hantke's claim that 'conspiracy fiction' achieves its aim of defamiliarising certain aspects of American culture "from the inside" (Hantke 1994, p30-31) is correct in the sense that what

Hantke describes as 'conspiracy fiction' is a form of American culture and hence could be said to be, in a particular sense, 'inside' that which it aims to analyse. However, this act of defamiliarisation is not deployed from a position that could be considered part of the conceptual 'centrality' of a 'normative' foundation. Rather, the normative centre is destabilised from a position that, in respect to its opposition to this centre, can only be defined as somewhat marginal. The functional necessity of this position of ex-centricity is confirmed by Don DeLillo's belief that the artist must, in a particular sense, stand at the edges of society, "independent of affiliation and independent of influence" (Daniel 1998, p390):

There are so many temptations for American writers to become part of the system ... that now, more than ever, we have to resist. American writers ought to stand and live in the margins, and be more dangerous.
(Daniel 1998, p390)

As a result of this position, in much postmodern American fiction, characters defined by their critical paranoid stance function as the representative figures of rebellious individuality, whereas conspiracy tends to represent the threats posed by the conformist forces of society. This relationship has been made evident in previous analyses of DeLillo's *MAO II*, in which writer Bill Gray battles against becoming part of the crowd phenomenon (in particular, avoiding the threat of the obliteration of individuality posed by the possibility of incorporation into the mass-consumer cultural crowd of images) that constitutes a conspiracy against individuality.

As an integral part of this marginal dissent against the inequalities of the normatively defined centre, authors such as Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, and William S. Burroughs often construct novel metonymic relations in order to defamiliarise normative sociopolitical practices, the most prevalent focal point of this practice being the capitalist system of socioeconomic relationships. Throughout *Gravity's Rainbow*, for example, the capitalist system of democracy is critically defamiliarised via the characterisation of World War II as a market-driven conspiracy. Through the pastiche-driven effect of the use of the economic idiom in connection with the genocidal horrors of war, the war itself is portrayed as a diversionary spectacle with motivational foundations in common with the logic of the capitalist system:

Don't forget the real business of the War is buying and selling. The murdering and the violence are self-policing, and can be entrusted to non-professionals. The mass nature of wartime death is useful in many ways. It serves as spectacle, as diversion from the real movements of the War. It provides raw material to be recorded into History, so that children may be taught History as sequences of violence, battle after battle, and be more prepared for the adult world. Best of all, mass death's a stimulus to just ordinary folks, little fellows, to try 'n' grab a piece of that Pie while they're still here to gobble it up. The true war is a celebration of markets.... So, Jews are negotiable. Every bit as negotiable as cigarettes, cunt, or Hershey bars. Jews also carry an element of guilt, of future blackmail, which operates, natch, in favour of professionals.
(GR, 105)

This sort of distrust of the mechanisms of capitalist corporations is similarly expressed in the section of *Gravity's Rainbow* entitled "The Story of Byron the Bulb" (GR, p647-655). Narrated in the form of a fable, 'The Story of Byron the Bulb' relates the adventures of a lightbulb, named Byron, manufactured in the German city of Osram by the Phoebus company. As it comes to appear that Byron is an "Immortal" bulb, who will never burn out, "the monitors in Switzerland begin to keep an eye on Byron" (GR, p650). When Byron does not burn out after 800 hours of "burn time", "the Committee on Incandescent Anomalies comes in and takes him away" (GR, p650). Byron is taken to "one of so many 'control points', where suspicious bulbs can be monitored easily", and when his burn time has passed 1000 hours: "the procedure now is standard: the Committee on Incandescent Anomalies sends a hit man to Berlin" (GR, p651). As Byron escapes from this assassination attempt, the clear intent of this fable is shown to be a criticism of the economic policy of exercising forms of complex control over manufactured products (such as devious modes of planned product obsolescence and consumer dependence) in order to maximise profits, to the disadvantage of principles of conservation and maximisation of available resources. The narrative defamiliarisation of these policies builds into a lengthy description of a complex network of deception, corruption and manipulation that extends far beyond the reach of one company, entirely motivated by sheer greed and with a variety of negative consequences for the unwitting citizen:

Phoebus based everything on bulb efficiency—the ratio of the usable power coming out, to the power put in. The Grid demanded that this ratio stay as small as possible. That way they got to sell more juice. On the other hand, low efficiency meant longer burning hours, and that cut into bulb sales for Phoebus. In the beginning Phoebus tried increasing filament resistance, reducing the hours of life on the sly and gradually—till the Grid noticed a fall-off in revenues, and started screaming. The two parties by and by reached an accord on a compromise bulb-life figure that would bring in enough money for both of them, and to go fifty-fifty on the costs of the antibulbsnatching campaign. Along with a more subtle attack against those criminal souls who forswear bulbs entirely and use candles, Phoebus's long-standing arrangement with the Meat Cartel was to restrict the amount of tallow in population by keeping more fat in meat to be sold regardless of cardiac problems that might arise, and redirecting most of what was trimmed off into soap production. Soap in those days was a booming concern. Among the consumers, the Bland Institute had discovered deep feelings about shit. Even at that, meat and soap were minor interlocks to Phoebus. More important were items like tungsten. Another reason why Phoebus couldn't cut down bulb life too far. Too many tungsten filaments would eat into available stockpiles of the metal—China being the major world source, this also brought in very delicate questions of Eastern policy—and disturb the arrangement between General Electric and Krupp about how much tungsten carbide would be produced, where and when and what the prices would be. The guidelines settled on were \$37-\$90 a pound in Germany, \$200-\$400 a pound in the U.S. This directly governed the production of machine tools, and thus all areas of light and heavy industry. When the War came, some people thought it unpatriotic of GE to have given Germany an edge like that. But nobody with any power. Don't worry.
(GR, p654)

For DeLillo, of prime importance is the idea that traditional institutional authorities have been supplanted by a global market-place whose power-base is both invisible and fluid,

and whose volatility consistently defies attempts to explain its workings. Because the contemporary world appears to lack definite points of anchorage, any scrutiny given to the problems faced by the confused individual seems to uncover problems of a deeper and more intractable order. The postmodern world of globalisation and mass communications thus appears to be inchoate and illogical, but the individual suspects that there is an underlying logic of an impossibly complex order. John McClure's work *Postmodern Romance: Don DeLillo and the Age of Conspiracy* identifies this logic as being the workings of global capitalism. As McClure writes:

[In DeLillo's works] capitalism has penetrated everywhere, but its penetration has not resulted in global rationalisation ... It seems instead to have sponsored a profound reversal: the emergence of zones and forces like those that imperial expansion has erased: jungle-like techno-tangles ... secret cults with their own codes and ceremonies, vast conspiracies.... These zones and forces—the various computer circuits, multinational business networks, espionage agencies, private armies, and unconventional political players—make a mockery of the collective desire of democracy and social justice.
(McClure 1991, p102-103)

DeLillo uses the mode of the conspiracy theory of the paranoiac as a way to both evoke and critique the contemporary order of the global market-place, with its extraordinary density of hidden linkages and unknown connections. From this foundation, the great bulk of DeLillo's work engages with forms of defamiliarisation of the capitalist system. *Great Jones Street* reveals the capitalist market to be a form of conspiratorial agency unto itself. Following the attempts of the novel's protagonist, rock musician Bucky Wunderlick, to escape the mindless cult of consumerism dominating the rock music industry, wild rumours start to circulate, dissociated from his actual activities. Despite Bucky's conscious attempts to achieve personal anonymity in opposition to the 'cult of personality' of the music industry, his disappearance as an individual actually generates a void that is filled by mass consumerism, and clears the way for his media-generated image to take his place, increasing the market for his records and a horde of unrelated merchandise. A host of characters in *Great Jones Street* are actually named after consumer products (Dr. Pepper, Hanes, Opel, Lycra Spandex, etc.) in order to demonstrate their affiliation with this conspiracy of consumerism. The hack writer who lives above Bucky Wunderlick is named Eddie Fenig, this name containing a pun on the German word for 'penny': ^{pfe(n)n}ig. Fenig produces scores of books in a myriad of popular genres, from science-fiction and detective-fiction to the romance novel, all of which are written with the sole motivation of consciously appealing to mass-marketability. The pun presented by Fenig's name and his prolificacy as a writer of 'pulp fiction' thus contribute to his self-described position as "a man of numbers" (DeLillo 1974, p51) preoccupied with the quantity of saleable merchandise rather than the quality of art. As one of Fenig's speeches demonstrates, he, like Bucky, is dependent on the market, an independently existing omnipotent entity that impassively defines the conditions of the lives of millions to the extent of slavery yet is beyond the reach of the individual:

'... the market is a strange thing, almost a living organism. It changes, it palpitates, it grows, it excretes. It sucks things in and then spews them up. It's a living wheel that turns and crackles.... It loves and kills.... The big wheel spins and gyrates and makes firecracker noises, going faster and faster and throwing off anybody who can't hold on.... The market is phenomenal, bright as a hundred cities, turning and turning, and there are little figures everywhere trying to hold on with one hand but they're getting thrown off into the surrounding night, the silence, the emptiness, the darkness, the basin, the crater, the pit.'

(DeLillo 1974, pp27, 141)

Despite Bucky's seemingly influential position as an immensely popular artist, he is in fact powerless to oppose the consumerist system upon which his influential identity is based. As is revealed by one character's remark, in relation to the conspiratorial networks of the capitalist system Bucky is rendered an impotent slave:

You have the illusion of power.... You're above ground, not under. The true underground is the place where power flows.... The corporations. The military. The banks. This is the underground network.

(DeLillo 1974, p231-232)

DeLillo's later novel *Players* is more specific in its defamiliarisation of the status of the capitalist system of economy, in particular the stockmarket, as a conspiracy against individual freedom. In *Players*, yuppie stockbroker Lyle Bland labours to involve himself with a group of terrorists, becoming implicated in an underworld of anti-capitalist exploits in order to escape the all-pervasive ennui of his professional and private life (hence the name 'Bland': boring, tasteless). As the novel progresses, Lyle becomes involved both with the members of a terrorist group and with agents of a governmental anti-terrorist intelligence agency, without showing any authentic commitment to either side. He utilises his entry into the field of terrorism as a form of commodified entertainment, short-circuiting its possibility for subversion by insisting upon its role in the conspiracy of consumer culture. The potential for effective terrorist opposition to the capitalist system of consumer economy is similarly co-opted by this system in *MAO II*, in which a terrorist organisation is said to trade hostages "like drugs, like weapons, like jewellery, like a Rolex or a BMW" (DeLillo 1992 c1991, p235). Despite the fact that these terrorist forces are defined as having a postcolonial background of imperial repression, which motivates their desire for self-determining freedom from colonising forces, the items listed above are valuable Western commodities. Here the colonialism of global capitalism has become ubiquitous, constituting an invisible conspiracy of consumerism that it is impossible to evade due to its dispersal across all national and ethnic boundaries. The group of terrorists that Lyle becomes involved with in *Players*, however, targets its attacks on offices of the Wall Street stockmarket, believing 'the system' to be substantially constituted of the electronic flow of stocks, shares, and credit as an almost mystical immortal entity that is malevolently directed by the forces of corporate greed:

'It's this *system* that we believe is their secret power. It all goes floating across the floor. Currents of invisible life. This is the centre of their existence. The

electronic system. The waves and charges. The green numbers on the board. This is what my brother calls their way of continuing on through rotting flesh, their closest taste of immortality. Not the bulk of all that money. The system itself, the current.'

(DeLillo 1991 c1977, p107)

Despite Lyle's involvement in terrorist activities, he ultimately relies upon 'the system' for an ordered and stable interpretation of the world and his place in it. A number of passages detail his wilful dependence on the security provided him by the environment of the stock-market:

The floor began to fill. People generally were cheerful. There was sanity here, even at the wildest times. It was all worked out. There were rules, standards and customs. In the electronic clatter it was possible to feel you were part of a breathtakingly intricate quest for order and elucidation, for identity among the constituents of a system.

(DeLillo 1991 c1977, p28)

Lyle sometimes carried yellow teleprinter slips with him for days. He saw in the numbers and stick symbols an artful reduction of the external world to printed output, the machine's coded model of exactitude. One second of study, a glance was all it took to return to him an impression of reality disconnected from the resonance of its own senses.

(DeLillo 1991 c1977, p70)

While individuals' dependence on the mechanisms of 'the system' to provide an interpretation of the world is criticised by the novels of both Pynchon and DeLillo, this is further complicated by their articulation of the system's imposition of enforced individual dependence upon its apparatuses. In contrast to DeLillo's explication of this issue as analysed above, Pynchon and Burroughs often follow an analogical connection between enforced dependence upon 'the system' and the metaphor of parasitic vampirism. *The Crying of Lot 49* portrays the system of capitalism as a 'conspiracy' that allows individuals such as Pierce Inverarity to accumulate a mass of wealth and power at the expense of condemning many others (such as the members of the underground groups that use the WASTE postal system) to a life of relative poverty, articulating the parasitic dependence of the elite of the system upon those trodden down by it. Other examples in Pynchon's works are more overt. In *Vineland*, for example, the novel's antagonist, government agent Brock Vond, has intimations of an invisible level of almost omnipotent power, alluding to the mysticism of the system and its immortal power as an individual entity: "He'd caught a fatal glimpse of that level where everybody knew everyone else, where however political fortunes below might bloom and die, the same people, the Real Ones, remained year in and year out, keeping what was desirable flowing their way" (Pynchon 1991 c1990, p276). Here, 'the Real Ones' are the immortal vampire figures, eternally static and stable while the world around them is turbulently chaotic. Their dependence on the political power bases supplied by the capitalist system is signified by the fact that they 'keep what was desirable flowing their way'. According to Marc C. Connor, referring to the figure of Brock Vond as a figure representative of the mysterious hostile forces that appear in Pynchon's other works, in *Vineland* "the malevolent forces themselves have altered: no longer shadowy and

unknowable, now these forces are identified, given a name and a face" (Conner 1996, p5). However much this may appear to be true with regard to Vond himself, 'the Real Ones' envisaged by Vond remain representative of a level of power that is distinctly beyond the reach of ordinary individuals. At the end of the novel, Vond's attempt at a final assault on his counter-cultural adversaries is mysteriously called back by an unidentified agency, by "remote control" (Pynchon 1991 c1990, p375), implying that the powerful mastery of 'the Real Ones' entails a radical separation from the realm of the 'common man'.¹⁷⁵ However, the most prominent examples of the parasitic/vampiric figure of the capitalist system in Pynchon's work occur in *Gravity's Rainbow*, in which the parasitic essence of what is known as "The System" (GR, p412) is characterised as "dusty Dracularity, the West's ancient curse" (GR, p263). At one point in the work, one of the novel's narrative voices speculates on the causes of the war, surmising that it was being dictated "by something that needed the energy-burst of war, crying, 'Money be damned, the very life of [insert name of Nation] is at stake', but meaning, most likely, *dawn is nearly here, I need my night's blood, my funding, funding, ahh more, more*" (GR, p521—brackets in original). This sort of criticism of the negative consequences of the vampiric mechanisms of 'The System' is displayed at greater length earlier in the novel:

Taking and not giving back, demanding that 'productivity' and 'earnings' keep on increasing with time, the System removing from the rest of the world these vast quantities of energy to keep its own tiny desperate fraction showing a profit: and not only most of humanity—most of the World, animal, vegetable and mineral is laid waste in the process.
(GR, p412)

Whilst previous analyses have shown that presentations of paranoia in both DeLillo's and Pynchon's work indicate the need for some form of mental structuring of the brute chaos of the world, the possibility of the reification of these fictive structures, on either an individual or a collective level, poses a perpetual danger. The continued implication throughout these works is that though all world-creations are, in a sense, 'paranoid', some sense of structured order must be imposed on the world in order for the individual to be able to meaningfully respond to his or her surroundings. However, the implication remains that one must be able to view reality in an ordered fashion, and yet be aware of the uncertain value of that structure as an interpretative system. The failure to recognise the 'paranoid', fictional, and contingent nature of any view of the world may lead to a degraded scene of ideologically ingrained anti-individualistic inequalities. It is in this sense that DeLillo's and Pynchon's fiction echoes the sentiments of William Blake's character Los of the epic poem *Jerusalem*: "I must Create a system, or be enslav'd by another Mans'" (chapter 1, line 20). As Mark Richard Siegel points out:

¹⁷⁵ On this topic, see footnote 148 of this thesis where it is argued that, for the postmodern novel, conspiracies operate by virtue of their exclusion of 'the common man'.

'Official' systems of structuring reality may be convenient means for justifying as necessary and expedient the personal interests of those in power, especially if the average person is unaware of the relativity of such systems.
(Siegel 1978, p18)

The acts of defamiliarisation of the capitalist system presented by the novels of Don DeLillo and Thomas Pynchon thus aim not only to expose the relativity of the system, but also to point out the numerous faults and inherent inequalities concealed by its 'natural', 'normative' status.

* * * * *

Next we will move on to a brief discussion of some of the major themes in the works of William S. Burroughs, in order to discuss his deployment of the paranoid critical method as a mode of resistance to what he identifies as conspiratorial systems of control. Burroughs' fiction presents the reader with a series of concerns that are often radically different from those presented by the works of Pynchon and DeLillo, but their common deployment of strategies of defamiliarisation is important. Burroughs has often been ridiculed by a number of critics as being a 'conspiracy theorist', but according to the most recent biographical account of his work and life, this is due to his almost overriding interest in destabilising ingrained systems of control: "If there is one constant running throughout his work then it is surely the fear of control. His novels display an almost psychotic vigilance for imprisoning systems, from drugs to desire through to religion and language" (Caveney 1998, p19-22). Burroughs himself corroborates this view of his work, stating clearly that:

Heaven and Hell exist in my mythology. Hell consists of falling into enemy hands, into the hands of the virus power, and heaven consists of freeing oneself from this power, of achieving inner freedom, freedom from conditioning. I may add that none of the characters in my mythology are free. If they were free they would not be in the mythological system, that is, in the cycle of conditioned action.
(Cited in (Mottram 1977, p40))

As Eric Mottram remarks, "Burroughs presents a loveless world whose control is entirely in the hands of capitalists, doctors, psychiatrists, con men, judges, police and military, whose aim it is to perpetuate mass infantilism, apathy and dependence" (Mottram 1977, p42-43). In such a context, Burroughs' so-called 'paranoia' may be read as an expression of a paranoid critical stance, motivated by a desire to escape the conditioning of 'the system' in order to realise a form of radical individual freedom.¹⁷⁶ His opposition to the system of control constituted by the capitalist system of mass consumerism is most evident in his

¹⁷⁶ As Tony Tanner writes, "there is an abiding dream in American literature that an unpatterned, unconditioned life is possible, in which your movements and stillnesses, choices and repudiations are all your own; ... there is also an abiding American dread that someone else is patterning your life, that there are all sorts of invisible plots afoot to rob you of your autonomy of thought and action, that conditioning is ubiquitous" (Tanner 1971, p15).

exposition of its underlying imperatives through his characterisation of 'junk' (heroin) as "the ideal product ... the ultimate merchandise":

No sales talk necessary. The client will crawl through a sewer and beg to buy.... The junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to the product. He does not improve and simplify his merchandise. He degrades and simplifies the client. He pays his staff in junk.
(Burroughs 1993 c1959, p8—ellipses in original)

According to Burroughs, the logic of highly fetishised consumerist capitalism is ultimately analogous to the logic of addiction, by which the product maintains priority over the actual consumer, who is transmuted in order to meet the specifically degrading needs of the inessential product. It is this logic that Burroughs characterises as "the basic formula of [the] 'evil' virus: *The Algebra of Need*" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, pp8,163) a cold, mathematical, unemotional drive that has no connection with desire, only with biological need: sheer physical and mental dependence. The appendix to *Naked Lunch* defines 'addiction' thus:

(The term is loosely used to indicate anything one is used to or wants. We speak of addiction to candy, coffee, tobacco, warm weather, television, detective stories, crossword puzzles). So misapplied the term loses any useful precision of meaning.... Morphine becomes a biologic need like water and the user may die if he is suddenly deprived of it. The diabetic will die without insulin, but he is not addicted to insulin. His need for insulin was not brought about by the use of insulin. He needs insulin to maintain a normal metabolism.
(Burroughs 1993 c1959, p187)

Burroughs' use of the theme of drug addiction contains implications far surpassing its literal significance, for he extends the drug addiction metaphor to encompass a wide-ranging scope of perceived systems of control. The introduction to *Naked Lunch*, entitled 'deposition: testimony concerning a sickness', functions on one level as an articulation of Burroughs' personal experience of drug addiction, but also contains an allusive level of engagement with broader methods of domination: "I awoke from The Sickness at the age of forty-five, calm and sane, and in reasonably good health except for a weakened liver and the look of borrowed flesh common to all those who survive The Sickness" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p7). Here the reference is to a form of drug addiction denotatively designated 'The Sickness' rather than 'a sickness', universalising the experience of addiction in order to elevate its status to become *the* problem of contemporary society. Burroughs defines this problem as involving more than the simple facts of drug addiction. Rather, it is portrayed as resulting from a system of what Timothy S. Murphy describes as "black-market economies of the flesh and spirit" (Murphy 1997, p47). According to Murphy, Burroughs "recognises that the organisation of the narcotics industry, which includes the police institutions charged with its eradication, stands as the model of all capitalist organisation" (Murphy 1997, p84). As Burroughs writes in the section of *Naked Lunch* entitled 'Afterthoughts on a Deposition', the drug problem presents a variety of localised effects that encompasses a range of threats to the freedom of the individual:

When I say 'the junk virus is public health problem number one of the world today,' I refer not just to the actual ill effects of opiates upon the individual's health (which, in cases of controlled dosage, may be minimal), but also to the hysteria that drug use often occasions in populaces who are prepared by the media and narcotics officials for a hysterical reaction.

The junk problem, in its present form, began with the Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914 in the U.S.A. Anti-drug hysteria is now worldwide, and it poses a deadly threat to personal freedoms and due-process protections of the law everywhere.

(Burroughs 1993 c1959, p15)¹⁷⁷

The mass paranoid witch-hunt mobilised by official forces in order to allow for the extension of the scope of their own power is detailed at length in *Junky*:

Initial symptoms of nationwide hysteria were clear. Louisiana passed a law making it illegal to be a drug addict. Since no time and place are specified and the term 'addict' is not clearly defined, no proof is necessary or even relevant under a law so formulated. No proof, and consequently, no trial. This is police-state legislation penalising a state of being. Other states were emulating Louisiana.... the anti-junk feeling mounted to a paranoid obsession, like anti-Semitism under the Nazis.

(Burroughs 1977 c1953, p142)

Burroughs not only presents the narcotics industry as a model of capitalist organisation, but portrays the illicit commercial system of the heroin trade itself as an integral constituent of this capitalist mode of economic operation. *Junky* contains an abundance of descriptions of the intricately detailed street-trade of heroin, thus accentuating the capitalistic essence of drug addiction.¹⁷⁸

Throughout Burroughs' depiction of the world of heroin, the figure of the vampire, who draws on the vitality of others in order to live and who is constantly in search of new victims, appears as an expression of parasitic dependence and control.¹⁷⁹ In the 'Ordinary Men and Women' section of *Naked Lunch*, this trope of the vampiric parasite is extended to encompass the metaphors of cancer and viral epidemics,¹⁸⁰ these metaphors strategically deployed in a criticism of the bureaucratic impulses of capitalist democracy:¹⁸¹

Democracy is cancerous, and bureaus are its cancer. A bureau takes root anywhere in the state, turns malignant like the Narcotics Bureau, and grows and grows, always reproducing more of its own kind, until it chokes the host if not controlled or

¹⁷⁷ For alternative sources of information that support this position, see particularly Joseph H. Berke's essay 'Reefer Madness: social fears and self-fulfilling prophecies' (Berke 1998b).

¹⁷⁸ See, for example, (Burroughs 1977 c1953, p4-7).

¹⁷⁹ The vampiric control figures of Burroughs' works are parasitic in the manner defined by Michael Serres as the relationship whereby a "human group is organised with one-way relations, where one eats the other and where the second cannot benefit at all from the first" (Serres 1982, p5).

¹⁸⁰ In *Naked Lunch*, the figure of the heroin dealer is represented as infecting those around him with elements of his own character: "I know this one pusher walks around humming a tune and everybody he passes takes it up. He is so grey and spectral and anonymous they don't see him and think it is their own mind humming the tune" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p20).

¹⁸¹ For the relevant connections between the bureaucratic impulse and mass paranoid anti-individuality see particularly Otto F. Kernberg's essay, 'Paranoid social developments as a consequence of ideological and bureaucratic regression' (Kernberg 1998) and John Jackson's 'Bureaucracies at work' (Jackson 1998).

excised. Bureaus cannot live without a host, being true parasitic organisms... Bureaucracy is wrong as a cancer, a turning away from the human evolutionary direction of infinite potentials and differentiation and independent spontaneous action, to the complete parasitism of a virus.
(Burroughs 1993 c1959, p111)

Here the equation of the 'cancer' of bureaucracy with the metaphor of a viral epidemic that diffuses a repressive system of homogenisation is shown to be in opposition to what, to Burroughs, is the liberating "direction of infinite potentials and differentiation and independent spontaneous action" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p111).

However much Burroughs may express his loathing of these systems of control, at many points in his work the line between controller and controlled, master and slave, is blurred. In *Junky*, for example, heroin is portrayed as transforming the individual into a dependant addict who is a mirror-image of the controlling heroin dealer. As the character Lupita in *Naked Lunch* remarks concerning the seller-buyer relation of the drug trade: "Selling is more of a habit than using ... Nonusing pushers have a contact habit, and that's one you can't kick" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p26-27). This view of controllers as being just as addicted to control as their vassals are to drugs is furthered by Lupita's story of Bradley the Buyer. The "Best narcotics agent in the industry", Bradley becomes so addicted to contact with heroin addicts that he "'comes to look more and more like a junky'" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p27). Bradley's vampiric need for contact with junkies becomes so insatiable that he eventually starts bribing policemen to leave him in precinct jail cells with arrested addicts:

The Buyer spreads terror through the industry. Junkies and agents disappear. Like a vampire bat he gives off a narcotic effluvium, a dank green mist that anaesthetises his victims and renders them helpless in his enveloping presence.
(Burroughs 1993 c1959, p29)

The figure of the 'addict-agent' recurs throughout Burroughs' work, and is narrated in *Junky* with particular attention to social situations that create an arena of mirrored addiction:

Now the Narcotics Bureau has taken it upon itself to incarcerate every addict in the U.S., they need more agents to do the work. Not only more agents, but a different type of agent. Like during prohibition, when bums and hoodlums flooded the Internal-Revenue Department, now addict-agents join the department for free junk and immunity. It is difficult to fake addiction. An addict knows an addict. The addict-agents manage to conceal their addiction, or, perhaps, they are tolerated because they get results. An agent who has to connect or go sick will bring a special zeal to his work.
(Burroughs 1977 c1953, p144)

As Burroughs states in *Naked Lunch*: "control can never be a means to any practical end ... It can never be a means to anything but more control ... Like junk" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p133—ellipses in original). For Burroughs, the cycle of control and addiction constitutes a vicious circle of dependence on the arbitrary constructions of the capitalist system.

One of the most significant characters in Burroughs' mythology of control and addiction is the figure of Dr. Benway, described in *Naked Lunch* as a "manipulator and coordinator of symbol systems, an expert on all phases of interrogation, brainwashing and control" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p31). On numerous occasions Benway makes a series of rather McLuhanesque claims, such as:

The study of thinking machines teaches us more about the brain than we can learn by introspective methods. Western man is externalising himself in the form of gadgets.
(Burroughs 1993 c1959, p33)

The use of such methods of control leads Benway's creation of a control-oriented state whose methods of ingrained conditioning lead him to confidently say: "A *functioning* police state needs no police" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p41). That the *modus operandi* of control utilised by Benway is a form of 'naturalisation' or 'normalisation' that aims to render the system impervious to the possibility of subversive attacks by its citizens is evident in statements by Benway such as: "The naked need of the control addicts must be decently covered by an arbitrary and intricate bureaucracy so that the subject cannot contact his enemy direct" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p31). The ingrained character of systems of control is further asserted by Burroughs' exposition of the role of the media in 'naturalising' an arbitrarily constructed system of social control that diverts interest from the true aim of the system: serving the interests of the corporatised state. As Burroughs states, "The mass media of newspapers, radio, television, magazines form a ceremonial calendar to which all citizens are subjected" (Odier 1970, p44). The world constructed by the all-encompassing presentations of the mass media is characterised by Burroughs as a 'reality studio'. As Timothy S. Murphy explains: "This is not a film that is *shown* to audiences to control them; the film *is* reality itself, and there is no audience outside it. We do not watch the reality film; we are part of it" (Murphy 1997, p158).

Considering the strategy of 'defamiliarisation' utilised by postmodern fiction, it is the denial of conspiracy, the assertion of the 'naturalness' of an arbitrarily constructed system of normative foundations of thought, that, according to Burroughs, is the strongest tool in the hands of the conspirator. As he writes in *Nova Express*: "Reality' is simply a more or less constant scanning pattern—The scanning pattern we accept as 'reality' has been imposed by the controlling power on this planet, a power primarily orientated towards total control" (Burroughs 1964, p80). Burroughs' novels thus aim to expose the workings of systems of meaning that, as Roland Barthes puts it, are "simultaneously imposed and demanded" (Barthes 1985, p251).

The postmodern novel's use of the critical paranoid stance in undermining the normative status of contemporary sociopolitical structures has been shown to constitute a widely utilised strategy of defamiliarisation, but the question of the efficacy of such strategies is yet to be addressed here. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick remarks: "Why bother exposing the ruses of power in a country where, at any given moment, 40 percent of young black men are enrolled in the penal system?" (Sedgwick 1997, p18). Whilst Sedgwick acknowledges that "[s]ome exposés, some demystifications, some bearings of witness do have great effectual force (though often of an unanticipated kind)", she is correct in stating, "the efficacy and directionality of such acts reside somewhere else than in their relation to knowledge per se" (Sedgwick 1997, p19). Knowledge has long been equated with power; but forms of knowledge that are not deployed for purposes other than the ideal of 'knowledge for its own sake' may do nothing more than contribute to a form of quiescent 'support by default' of the current situation of power bases. Such is implied by Pynchon's statement in *Gravity's Rainbow*, "We do know what's going on, and we let it go on" (GR, p712); it is the deployment of knowledge that is at issue here.

With regard to the possibility of offering modes of direct resistance to 'the system', the major problem articulated by Burroughs and Pynchon is the idea that fighting conspiracy with counter-conspiracy threatens to perpetuate the problematic existence of conspiracies. This idea is most evident in Pynchon's presentation of 'The Counterforce' in *Gravity's Rainbow*. 'The Counterforce' is described by one character as being a 'We-system' that arises in a form of dialectical opposition to the ruling 'They-system':

'Of course a well-developed They system is necessary—but it's only half the story. For every They there ought to be a We. In our case there is. Creative paranoia means developing at least as thorough a We-system as a They-system— ... I mean what They and Their hired psychiatrists call "delusional systems". Needless to say, "delusions" are always officially defined. We don't have to worry about questions of real or unreal. They only talk out of expediency. It's the *system* that matters. How the data arrange themselves inside it. Some are consistent, others fall apart.' (GR, p638)

However, another character identifies the fault that lies in this mode of resistance: "Well, you're playing Their game, then" (GR, p638). While the 'We system' remains defined by its oppositionary relation to the 'They system' it is, in fact, a mirror-image of the 'They system'. As one of the narrative voices remarks, the members of 'The Counterforce' still suffer from the conditioning of the system and, despite their resistance to it, are still dependent on its methods of organisation:

Sad but true. They are as schizoid, as double-minded in the presence of money, as any of the rest of us, and that's the hard fact. The Man has a branch office in each or our brains, his corporate emblem is a white albatross, each local rep has a cover known as the Ego, and their mission on this world is Bad Shit. We do know what's going on, and we let it go on. As long as we can see them, stare at them, those massively moneyed, once in a while. As long as they allow us a glimpse, however rarely. We need that. (GR, p712-713)

The same notion is articulated throughout Burroughs' work. As Charles Russell puts it: "Burroughs ... suggests that to struggle against social control means to reinforce one's prior identification with it—and, even more disturbing, that to actively oppose the enemy ensures that one remains defined by them; for as long as one is obsessed with fighting the opposition, one is not free of it" (Russell 1980, p32). The paradox that lies at the heart of this problem is articulated by Burroughs himself:

He who opposes force with counterforce alone forms that which he opposes and is formed by it. History shows that when a system of government is overthrown by force a system in many respects similar will take place. On the other hand he who does not resist force that enslaves and exterminates will be enslaved and exterminated.
(Odir 1970, p101)¹⁸²

In *The Wild Boys* and other more recent works, Burroughs seeks a form of resistance in countercultural fantasy groups that utilise guerrilla tactics in order to destabilise dominant oppressive systems. These groups embody his ideal of a communal society based on homosexual relationships and belief in certain mystical/magical doctrines. The most notable of these groups, the Wild Boys, was initially based on Burroughs' reactions to the public protests and rioting that occurred at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. In his report for *Esquire* magazine, Burroughs called for "more riots and more violence" from the students (Odir 1970, p81). As he wrote in *Exterminator!* concerning the events of 1968, "nonviolence is not exactly my program" (Burroughs 1979 c1973, p96). The Wild Boys' methods of resistance are, in essence, parodies of their enemies' modes of control. They eliminate their enemies by spreading "trained killer viruses" (Burroughs 1992 c1969, p133) using the viral-control apparatus of society against itself (Burroughs 1992 c1969, p139). However, the Wild Boys eventually fail in their mission, ostensibly due to the similarity of their methods to those of their enemies. In *Port of Saints*, for example, after the activities of the Wild Boys come to an end, the description of the results of their actions is presented with allusions to the eventual reinstatement of the tyrannic rule of their traditional enemies:

Camera pans the scattered forces and broken morale of the militants ... teenage alcoholics, underground press closing down, black panthers finished, censorship coming back, pollution, over-population, atomic tests ... Flashback shows the wild boys mowed down by cold eyed narcs and Southern lawmen backed by religious women and big money.
(Burroughs 1980 c1973, pp24-26)

¹⁸² This is an idea similarly presented in Foucault's analysis of power in Volume 1. of *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault insists that there is no 'escape' from power, no 'outside' of power, and that any movements in any direction are always, by definition, caught up in the mechanisms of power: "[T]here is no escaping from power ... it is always-already present, constituting the very thing which one attempts to counter it with.... Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power.... by definition, [resistance] can only exist in the strategic field of power relations" (Foucault 1990 c1976, pp82, 95-96).

In one of his later works, *The Western Lands*, Burroughs' presentation of the possibility for subversive resistance is tempered by a disturbing sense of irreversible damage, summed up in the terse acknowledgement: "We lost!" (Burroughs 1987, p254).

For Burroughs, successful strategies of resistance to the system do not lie in modes of direct opposition. Rather, successful resistance is achieved through the utilisation of subversive strategies of defamiliarisation. The critical paranoid stance taken by the novels themselves thus aim to deconstructively disturb monological notions of reality, advocating a pluralist view of reality that undermines the perceived absolute status of the normative mechanisms of 'the system'.

This strategy is most evident in Burroughs' critique of Western social structures that focus on the operations of language. For an explanation of Graham Caveney's statement that "Burroughs was less interested in side-stepping systems of control than in exploding them from within" (Caveney 1998, p90) particularly regarding his use of this strategy directed against the operations of language in particular, one might turn to the argument proposed by Paul de Man's *Resistance to Theory*. According to de Man, authority depends on the fiction of reference or meaning; that authority can therefore be undone by exploding such fictions, not by producing a new myth or reality, but by exposing the fictional character of reality as a narrative process, in so doing rendering language useless for purposes of domination (de Man 1986, p10). Following the work of Alfred Korzybski, whose seminars Burroughs attended at the University of Chicago in 1939, Burroughs' works explores the links between linguistic structures and the pathology of the human mind/body in Western society. As he writes in *The Job*, "Universal literacy with a concomitant control of word and image is now the instrument of control" (Odier 1970, p147). Burroughs' theory that language is a virus that uses the human body as a host, constituting the most powerful form of control, according to David Joselit, is motivated by "a preoccupation with the capacity of images to mutate and replicate like viruses within the 'social body.... This ability to endlessly replicate is, in Burroughs's view, an instance of the falsifying power of images—and words—to exercise social control" (Joselit 1996, p1).¹⁸³ According to Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of systems of language, the ideological inscriptions of language function by concealing the unstable foundations of these systems of signification, presenting themselves as having the status of objectivity:

Official language, particularly the system of concepts by which the members of a given group provide themselves with a representation of their social relations, ... sanctions and imposes what it states, tacitly laying down the dividing line between

¹⁸³ As Frederick M. Dolan writes of Burroughs' theory of the controlling mechanisms of language, "Discourse, in the form of 'word lines controlling thought feeling and apparent sensory impressions' lodges itself in the human host and reproduces its scripts, argumentative routines, and programs in ways that entangle the individual subject in a world it can neither master nor effectively negotiate" (Dolan 1991, p536).

the thinkable and the unthinkable, thereby contributing to the maintenance of the symbolic order from which it draws its authority. Thus officialisation is only one aspect of the objectifying process through which the group teaches itself and conceals from itself its own truth, inscribing in objectivity its representation or what it is and thus binding itself by this public declaration.
(Bourdieu 1977, p21-22)

Burroughs' strategies of linguistic disruption function as an attempt to undermine the hidden control mechanisms that he identifies as being inscribed in any number of forms of language. His numerous strategies of linguistic disruption amount to a deobjectification of official language in an attempt to reveal its arbitrary status and to thereby destabilise its ideological foundations. One of the major aims of the Wild Boys is thus to undermine the subconscious control mechanisms that underlie the operations of language:

Despite disparate aims and personnel of its constituent members the underground is agreed on basic objectives.... We intend to destroy all dogmatic verbal systems. The family unit and its cancerous expansion into tribes, countries, nations we will eradicate at its vegetable roots. We don't want to hear any more family talk, mother talk, father talk, cop talk, priest talk, country talk *or* party talk. To put it country simple we have heard enough bullshit.
(Burroughs 1992 c1969, p139-140)

Much of the work of Kathy Acker engages with Burroughs' belief in language as a mechanism of subliminally operative control. In *Blood and Guts in High School*, for example, hegemonic forces are portrayed as being in control of the operations of language itself, denying the possibility of language being used against its owners:

Mr Fuckface: You see, we own the language. Language must be used clearly and precisely to reveal our universe.
Mr Blowjob: Those rebels are never clear. What they say doesn't make sense.
Mr Fuckface: It even goes against the religions to tamper with sacred languages.
Mr Blowjob: With our languages the only people the rebels can kill are themselves.
(Acker 1984 c1978, p136)

In *Pussy, King of the Pirates*, a group of countercultural revolutionaries attempt to avoid the use of recognisable language in order to free its members of certain oppressive modes of cultural conditioning:

[They] learned that if language or words whose meanings seemed definite are dissolved into a substance of multiple gestures and cries, a substance which has a more direct, a more visceral capacity for expression, then all the weight that the current social, political, and religious hegemonical forms of expression carry will be questioned. Become questionable. Finally, lost. The weight of culture: questioned and lost.
(Acker 1996, p31)

Empire of the Senseless further bonds Acker's work with the type of critique of language proposed by Burroughs, outlining a series of connections between language, addiction and social control:

The library was the American Intelligence's central control network, its memory, what constituted its perception and understanding. (A hypothesis of the political

uses of culture.) It was called MAINLINE. The perception based on culture is a drug, a necessity for sociopolitical control.
(Acker 1988, p36-37)

As an alternative to the linear nature of traditional literary practices, Burroughs insists upon linguistic practices that are spatialised and non-linear, finding models for such procedures in the hieroglyphic and pictographic languages of the Ancient Egyptians and the abstract paintings of Brion Gysin.¹⁸⁴ Such is evident in his use of the 'cut-up', a procedure whereby two or more disparate texts are interwoven by being cut into sections and rearranged with each other, the randomised results of this textual interspersation constituting the 'cut-up' text. The 'cut-up' is thus a text that is derivative in the sense that it comprises entirely the raw data of the foundational texts which were fundamental in its creation, but it constitutes a creative and individual originality all of its own nevertheless.¹⁸⁵ As David Ingram explains:

In political terms, Burroughs ... conceived cut-up experimentation as a counter-technology to authoritarian and tyrannical control, questioning and disrupting mass media representations of reality by revealing new, ironic areas of signification in the habitual and formularised 'messages' of monopolistic power.
(Ingram 1996, p109)

The cut-up can, therefore, be conceived as a form of negative poetics, assaulting the structures of coherent linguistic arrangements in order to break down underlying social controls.¹⁸⁶

Though Burroughs' most famous work, *Naked Lunch*, is not a cut-up text, its structure of juxtaposed multiple narrative voices presenting a diverse array of discrete scenes (known as 'routines') anticipates the disjunctive effects produced by the cut-up. The 'Atrophied Preface' to *Naked Lunch* insists on its systemless structure of interconnection that presents a decentred schema of connections almost akin to the 'hyper-linked' arrangement of the internet:

Why all this waste paper getting The People from one place to another? Perhaps to spare The Reader stress of sudden space shifts and keep him Gentle? And so a ticket is bought, a taxi bought, a plane boarded.
(Burroughs 1993 c1959, p172)

You can cut into *Naked Lunch* at any intersection point.
(Burroughs 1993 c1959, p176)

The Word is divided into units which be all in one piece and should be so taken, but the pieces can be had in any order being tied up back and forth, in and out fore and aft like an innaresting sex arrangement. This book spillⁿ off the page in all directions, ... Now I, William Seward, will unlock my word horde.
(Burroughs 1993 c1959, p180)

¹⁸⁴ See particularly (Burroughs 1996), (Sobieszek 1996, p18-22), and (Grauerholz 1991 c1988).

¹⁸⁵ See particularly (Friedberg 1991 c1979).

¹⁸⁶ Robin Lydenberg speaks of Burroughs' method as a way of escaping the "preconditioning" of language via an "exercise in negativity" that draws into question the sanctity of the word and the notion of authorship (Lydenberg 1987, p48-49).

While this method of literary conception might seem to hold some sort of correlation with paranoid systems of interconnection, it actually articulates a position quite contrary to the systematising impetus of paranoia. The structure of *Naked Lunch* is centreless and aleatory, lacking linear narrative sequence and denying closure: of delimited interpretation of the book as a distinctly coherent entity, and of the notion of a unified and unifying 'plot'. The closest thing to a 'plot' that could be discerned within *Naked Lunch* would perhaps comprise a section that details a number of fictional organisations that compete for power over subjects, such as 'Islam Inc.', a group of capitalists that destabilises developing nations through acts of diplomatic subversion and industrial espionage. The most notable examples of this kind within the novel are the four 'Parties of Interzone': 'Liquefactionists', who try to dissolve all differences into their own identity, thereby eliminating dissent; 'Divisionists', who bombard the world with replicas of themselves to the same end as the Liquefactionists; 'Senders', who aim to perfect telepathic methods of brain-washing and mind-control; and 'Factualists', who resist the oppressive hegemony of homogeneity posited by the control schemes of the other parties instead favouring an anarchistic, uncontrolled society of multiplicities. Burroughs' emphasis on the desirability of the multiplicity and plurality of the Factualists, as opposed to the tyrannically monological notions of reality advocated by their opponents, is deployed in opposition to what he argues is the power of the system to "falsify, misrepresent, misquote, rule out of consideration as *a priori* ridiculous or simply ignore and rule out of existence: data, books, discoveries that they consider prejudicial to establishment interest" (Burroughs 1970 c1966, p8). His argument in this respect recalls Herbert Marcuse's analysis of contemporary society as a one-dimensional system in which "ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to the terms of this universe" (Marcuse 1968 c1964, p26-27). As Burroughs writes in *The Ticket That Exploded*:

To conceal the bankruptcy of the reality studio it is essential that no one should be in a position to set up another reality set. The reality film has now become an instrument and weapon of monopoly. The full weight of the film is directed against anyone who calls the film into question with particular attention to writers and artists.

(Burroughs 1987 c1968, p151)

Kathy Acker criticises Burroughs' project to disrupt the operations of language, stating that it depends on the very mechanisms that it aims to critique:

Ten years ago it seemed possible to destroy language through language: to destroy language which normalises and controls by cutting the language. Nonsense would attack that empire-making (empirical) empire of language, the prisons of meaning. But this nonsense, since it depended on sense, simply pointed back to the normalising institutions.

(Acker 1988, p133)

Burroughs clearly does rely on particular modes of linguistic (de)construction in order to undermine the operations of language. But, while writing and language is seen as a form

of control, for Burroughs it is also seen as a method of escape, as is narrated in the 1985 introduction to *Queer*: "I live with the constant threat of possession, and a constant need to escape possession, from Control.... I have had no choice except to write my way out" (Burroughs 1986 c1985b, p18). The reason for Burroughs' ambivalence toward the operations of language lies in his viewing the project of the elimination of linguistic communication as a means to unmake the normative constitution of the self, a task that, in itself, is viewed somewhat ambiguously within Burroughs' own work. The problem, with regard to Burroughs' radical definition of freedom, is that with this total freedom the linguistically constructed self (and its entrapment in the simulacrum universe of the 'reality studio') ceases to exist. Burroughs often portrays this as a means of radical liberation from the forces of control and addiction. In *Nova Express*, for example, the narrative recounts the use of a 'Silence Sickness', which destroys "citizens who had been composed entirely of word" (Burroughs 1964, p77) a weapon that liberates its users by negating the controlling effects of language. However, whilst the linguistic construction of the self is often conceptualised as being a threat to individual freedom,¹⁸⁷ at other times the loss of self is also presented as threatening. In *Junky*, for example, the particular loss of self achieved via the use of drugs causes the individual to lose control over the self and, rather than accomplishing total freedom, leaves him open to the worst consequences of the conspiracy of addiction:

The envelope of personality was gone, dissolved by his junk-hungry cells. Viscera and cells, galvanised into a loathsome insect-like activity, seemed on the point of breaking through the surface. His face was blurred, unrecognisable, at the same time shrunken and tumescent. (Burroughs 1977 c1953, p58)

He did not have the concentration of energy necessary to hold himself together and his organism was on the point of disintegrating into its component parts. (Burroughs 1977 c1953, p100)

For Burroughs, the ultimate horror posited by the potential loss of the self is that it may allow the subject to be completely traversed by the social mechanisms of control. *Queer*, for example, narratively presents a form of 'automatic obedience' that is linked to the schizophrenic loss of defensive self-other boundaries:

In some cases of schizophrenia a phenomenon occurs known as automatic obedience. I say, 'Stick out your tongue', and you can't keep yourself from obeying. Whatever I say, whatever anyone says, you must do. Get the picture? A pretty picture, isn't it, so long as you are the one giving the orders that are automatically obeyed. Automatic obedience, synthetic schizophrenia, mass-

¹⁸⁷ See, for example, the section in *Naked Lunch* concerning the threat that the coherent self poses to the individual as is metaphorically represented by the 'Bang-utot', a mental disease in the throes of which the subject fears his own penis will enter and kill him. This tale proposes the ultimate narcissistic nightmare of self-invasion, the self splitting from itself and attempting to utterly destroy the original subject: "Bang-utot, literally, '... attempting to get up and groaning ...' Death occurring in the course of a nightmare ... Victims often know that they are going to die, express the fear that their penis will enter the body and kill them. Sometimes they cling to the penis in a state of shrieking hysteria calling on others for help lest the penis escape and pierce the body" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p67).

produced to order. That is the Russian dream, and America is not far behind. The bureaucrats of both countries want the same thing: Control. The super-ego, the controlling agency, gone cancerous and berserk.
(Burroughs 1986 c1985b, p91)¹⁸⁸

As Burroughs admits in *Naked Lunch*: "Americans have a special horror of giving up control, of letting things happen in their own way without interference. They would like to jump down into their stomachs and digest the food and shovel the shit out" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p170). Whatever the outcome of the loss of subjectivity, it is obvious that in Burroughs' mythological system the worst possible outcome is uncritical acceptance of the current situation, because it constitutes a mode of unintentional support.

The mode of resistance ultimately advocated by the works of Pynchon and Burroughs is intimately tied up with a particular notion of apocalypse. As earlier analyses have demonstrated, in postmodern fiction the notion of 'final meaning' attached to apocalyptic revelation is continually deferred and ultimately subverted.¹⁸⁹ Its almost obsessive

¹⁸⁸ In later works this idea is personified in the figures of 'Latahs': "Otherwise sane, Latahs compulsively imitate every motion once their attention is attracted by snapping the fingers or calling sharply. A form of compulsive involuntary hypnosis" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p36).

¹⁸⁹ With regards to postmodern literature, the central point of any conspiracy (the 'secret') is never uncovered because of this eternal deferment. In its capacity as a continual Other it is, by definition, always already elsewhere. Even tenuous closure is provisional and localised due to the fact that the uncovered secret was never *the* secret in the first place, and only points one toward another potential 'secret'. Thus revelation is always cast off via co-optation into a wider conspiratorial schemata. As an example of this point, one might turn to the distinction between the postmodern detective/crime fiction of James Ellroy and James Lee Burke and older modes of crime fiction as represented by the works of Raymond Chandler and Jim Thompson. In the novels of Thompson and Chandler, the conspiratorial controller is a distant figure who is at the centre of everything, this centrality of distant power explaining the lack of other characters' agency. In the postmodern crime/detective fiction of James Ellroy and James Lee Burke, on the other hand, the conspirator is overtly visible, and is usually discovered to be under some form of conspiratorial control himself. This leads to an infinite telescoping of conspiratorial subplots that spiral outwards, interpenetrating all possible spaces. Not only is there no escape from conspiracy in these works (for everything is mediated and penetrated by the conspiratorial spread of globalist capitalism), but this dispersal of conspiracy decentres conspiracy itself, implying that once 'a conspiracy' (this can never be 'The Conspiracy') has been revealed, not only can nothing be achieved by the act of exposure, but one also glimpses the totalising embrace of conspiracy; its margins are everywhere, but its centre is nowhere. In postmodern crime/detective fiction, the dichotomy between cops (good guys) and robbers (bad guys) is effectively abolished, as the police are often presented as corrupt, whereas criminals are often given a sense of moral superiority. This fact, and constant allusions to earlier modes of detective fiction within these texts, points toward the disparity between the 'real' situation and the idealisation presented by 'pulp fiction'. The scales of justice are rarely, if ever, balanced, the 'good guys' often getting killed whilst the 'bad guys' continue their nefarious affairs. As Josh Cohen writes of the fiction of James Ellroy, "As he has explicitly asserted, Ellroy's shift of narrative perspective from the Chandlerian private-eye to the waged cop constitutes a critique of the romanticised and historically inaccurate figuration of crime as existential conflict between alienated individual and urban modernity, and so marks the progressive cooptation of *flaneurie* by the State" (Cohen 1998, p132). Revelation here is thus conceptualised as narratively based, centreless (though structurally referring to a Derridean absent centre) hermeneutic structure. 'No secret is an end in itself'

fascination for apocalypse and narrative endings manifests in elaborate strategies for the subversion or negation of any sort of closure. According to Lois Parkinson Zamora's work *Writing the Apocalypse*, postmodern fiction avoids the closure of apocalypse in two distinctive ways: it uses either a closed structure that ends by returning the reader to the beginning of the text, a bounded structure which encloses its own lack of finality; or an open structure that multiplies potential endings and remains fundamentally open-ended (Zamora 1989, p5). For an example of 'closed' modes of literary apocalypse, one might turn to William Gass's introduction to William Gaddis's *The Recognitions*, which directs the reader to "begin again" after reaching the mammoth novel's apocalyptic boundary:

A few critics confessed they could not reach the novel's conclusion except by skipping. Well, how many have actually arrived at the last page of Proust or completed *Finnegan's Wake*? What does it mean to finish *Moby-Dick* anyway? Do not begin this book with any hope of that. This is a book you are meant to befriend. It will be your lifelong companion. You will end only to begin again. (Gass 1993, pvii)

The works of John Barth defer apocalyptic denouement in the manner of his beloved Sheherezade, the fictional narrator of the *Thousand and One Nights*. Barth's fictions end with exhaustion, an ending to the play of words that is indicative of the end of what can be done with a particular combination of words, rather than being apocalyptic.¹⁹⁰ This sort of fiction is 'terminal' in the sense that a train station is a terminal in the middle of the line, on the way to somewhere else, or a computer a terminal in a serial network, rather than of the finality of a story that is 'terminated'. In such a mode of apocalyptic denouement, endings

becomes the epistemology of this vision of postmodern paranoia: linguistically based, interrelated in an endless hermeneutic dependent upon *différance*.

¹⁹⁰ This achieved in Barth's works in a number of ways. Both *Giles Goat-Boy* and *The Sot-Weed Factor* end with a number of epilogues that undermine and expose all proposed resolution of both structure and content (Barth 1967 c1966) (Barth 1969 c1960); *Sabbatical: A Romance* ends with the principal characters ready to repeat the novel which the reader has just finished reading (Barth 1982, p365); *The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor* ends with a section entitled 'Interlude: The Last Words of Somebody the Sailor', in which a character weighs the possibilities for future action, ending with a half-finished sentence: 'I'd find the family, take my ease there among the dandelions with' (Barth 1992 c1991, p571); *Chimera* ends similarly with the unfinished assertion that the tale is "no *Bellerophoniad*. It's a" (Barth 1972, p308); *The Tidewater Tales: A Novel* ends with a section called 'That's it?', the narrator considering a "New ball game! Maybe a whole new tale in verse ... or prose: Our House's Increase, by P.S. out of Katherine Sherritt Sagamore, its Once Upon a Time the Ever After of:" (Barth 1988 c1987, p655); the 'Frame Tale' of Barth's collection of short stories, *Lost in the Funhouse*, is a Möbius strip with the words, "Once upon a time there was a story that began" printed on it, to be read circularly *ad infinitum* (Barth 1981 c1968, p1-2); in 'Title' the narrator repetitively wishes for ends, denouement, and so on, but even the end of the story subverts finality: "Let the *dénouement* be soon and unexpected, painless if possible, quick at least, above all soon. Now now! How in the world will it ever", the final word and the full stop being omitted (Barth 1981 c1968, p110); the final period is similarly lacking from 'Autobiography', whereas 'Petition' ends with a comma (Barth 1981 c1968, pp37, 68); in 'Life-Story' the story ends when the fictional author and his character are interrupted: "He did at last as did his fictional character end his ending story endless by interruption, cap his pen" (Barth 1981 c1968, p126); 'Anonymiad' returns the reader to the beginning when the end is reached (Barth 1981 c1968, p194).

become non-events.¹⁹¹ The conjunction of apocalypse and narrative boundaries has been made clear by Frank Kermode's book *The Sense of an Ending* (Kermode 1967). Lois Parkinson Zamora gives a brief précis of his argument:

The directedness of apocalyptic narration is closely related to narrative plot. Like apocalypse, most plots may be described as a teleology of words and episodes, as comprehensive structures of action that are interrelated in a legible whole. (Kermode 1967, p13)

In *The Sense of an Ending*, Kermode observes that the relationship between individual human span and the span of history has become increasingly problematised in the postmodern era by the modern lengthening of the scale of perceived history.¹⁹²

As opposed to the closed form of apocalypse (outlined above), Zamora states that: "the law of entropy rather than the patterns of apocalypse ... structures Pynchon's fictions and structures his vision of the end of the world" (Zamora 1982, p51). According to Zamora, in Pynchon's fictions the hopefulness of apocalypse gives way to "the bleak mechanism of a purely physical world that is irreversibly running out of energy" (Zamora 1982, p51). The notion of an entropic end is perhaps most notably present in *Gravity's Rainbow*, where it is a potential (but not inevitable) result of the vampiric parasitism of the capitalist system:

Taking and not giving back, demanding that 'productivity' and 'earnings' keep on increasing with time, the System removing from the rest of the world these vast quantities of energy to keep its own tiny desperate fraction showing a profit: and not only most of humanity—most of the World, animal, vegetable and mineral is laid waste in the process. The System [...] sooner or later must crash to its death, when its addiction to energy has become more than the rest of the World can supply, dragging with it innocent souls all along the chain of life. Living inside the System is like riding across the country in a bus driven by a maniac bent on suicide ... (GR, p412)

In the above passage, the theme of the individual's subjugation by the power of the system is somewhat balanced by a recognition of the system's parasitic dependence on a variety of resources (vegetable, mineral and animal; including human) that are slowly leeched dry as a result of the system's vampiric need for these resources in order to exist. However, the novel's exposition of the collapse of the system is by no means a positive vision of the liberation of the individual from repressive forces. Rather, the fall of the system is shown to be directed by the eventual dissipation of the entire world's supply of resources, an end-of-the-world scenario akin to the triumph of entropy through the eventual heat-death of the universe as foretold by the second law of thermodynamics. A similar statement might be made concerning the last paragraph of one of Burroughs' last novels *The Western*

¹⁹¹ This paradox brings to mind the story of English Puritan Thomas Beverley, who predicted the apocalypse in 1697, and in 1698 published the explanation that the world had, in fact, ended on schedule, but that no one had noticed it (Rother 1976, p21).

¹⁹² Hannah Arendt similarly discusses the absence of beginning and end in contemporary conceptions of history in her essay 'The Concept of History' (Arendt 1969 c1961).

Lands, a paragraph beginning, "The old writer couldn't write anymore because he had reached the end of words, the end of what can be done with words" (Burroughs 1987, p258). The last line of the novel is, in fact, a phrase taken from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: "'Hurry up, please. It's time'" (Burroughs 1987, p258) further alluding to the idea that the world will end, in the final words of Eliot's 'The Hollow Men', "*Not with a bang but a whimper*"¹⁹³

Perhaps because of the initial widespread unfamiliarity of the literary community with such scientific concepts as entropy, when understandings (admittedly of distinctly mixed varieties of comprehension and conceptual comprehensibility) finally did arise, it was perhaps inevitable that the importance of the concept to an understanding of Pynchon's work was grossly exaggerated.¹⁹⁴ Articles and books attributing the concept of entropy to almost every aspect of Pynchon's work have proliferated,¹⁹⁵ and only a few critics have pointed out the need for discretion in considering his use of the concept. Most notable is Victoria De Zwaan's article 'Pynchon's "Entropy"', which points out that, whilst Pynchon's early short story 'Entropy' explores, on the one hand, different uses of the term entropy in thermodynamics and information theory and, on the other, the problems that follow from applying the concept to social, biological, and psychological systems, ... [the] application of the term 'entropy' to 'the universe' is only possible if one believes that the universe is a closed system that operates like a machine" (Zwaan 1993, p1). This, according to Zwaan, is a nihilistic attitude that Pynchon's works critique, rather than being a theory that they uncritically adhere to:

[Pynchon] examines the nihilism of the wholesale application of entropy to the world, not only in the thermodynamic and informational spheres, but also in cultural, social, and intellectual domains.... In short, Pynchon plays with the metaphorical possibilities of, and the analogical relationships between, the ... uses of the term entropy in order to show its nihilism.
(Zwaan 1993, p1)

Pynchon does utilise the concept of entropy as a metaphor to criticise certain tendencies within American society, (particularly its increasing leaning toward anti-individuality and concurrent tendencies towards passive conformity), but, more often not, as a call for vigilance. For both Pynchon and Burroughs, the entropic end becomes inevitable only if the parasitic forces of the capitalist system are unchecked in their practice of vampirically bleeding the world dry of its natural resources. Neither Burroughs nor Pynchon present the world as a closed system that is inescapably subject to the forces of entropy. Rather,

¹⁹³ This use of the notion of inevitable entropic decline is most similar to Bertrand Russell's explication, "There is no law of cosmic progress, but only an oscillation upward and downward, with a slow trend downward on the balance owing to the diffusion of energy" (Russell 1949, p81).

¹⁹⁴ For critical recognition of this, see particularly (Willis 1990, p33) (Zwaan 1993).

¹⁹⁵ See, for example, (Harris 1971), (Friedman 1983), (May 1972), (Lewicki 1984), (Slade 1974), (Abernathy 1972), (Plater 1978), (Richardson 1972), (Seed 1981), and (Simberloff 1978).

the 'openness' of their fiction insists upon the possibility of the continual recreation of a universe defined by its multiplicitous plurality.

To postmodern writers, as to writers before them, the advent of apocalypse is viewed with hope, envisaged as an occurrence that will bring positive change, rebirth, and renewal. Hence Hunter S. Thompson's cynical statement, "Those bastards have been promising us the apocalypse for as far back as I can remember, but they always weasel out of it—and, frankly, I've just about given up hope" (Thompson 1995 c1994, p68) betrays a sense of hope surrounding the potential advent of apocalypse by indicating a sense of despair concerning the prospect of its impossibility. A character in Kathy Acker's *Pussy, King of the Pirates* vests a similar hope in apocalypse, awaiting the appearance of "[t]he only thing in the world that's worth beginning: the end of the world" (Acker 1996, p27). As American historian Perry Miller writes, the "charm" of apocalypse is given in the fact that destruction is "seen as a positive act, increasing the fund of existence" (Miller 1976 c1956, p234) rather than as the degenerative decay that is entropic decline. Despite this desire for apocalyptic rebirth, the open-ended anti-form of the postmodern novel works to deflate the very possibility of apocalyptic renewal in the normally accepted sense. *Naked Lunch*, for example, explicitly denies the validity of any form of revelatory apocalypse based on the foundations of demarcated temporal boundaries:

You were not there for *The Beginning*. You will not be there for *The End*. Your knowledge of what is going on can only be superficial and relative.
(Burroughs 1993 c1959, p173-174)

Whilst the problems inherent in Burroughs' task of resistance to mechanisms of social control seem to necessitate some conception of apocalypse for resolution, the notion of apocalyptic closure as a mode of denouement that brings a sense of finality to the task of resistance is always denied through deferral. To Burroughs, the very idea of an end to the task of resistance is an anathema, involving as it does a sense of complacency antithetical to the perceived necessity of eternal vigilance against the ever-present threat of control. As Frederick Dolan explains, any relaxation in the task of defamiliarising modes of resistance relies "on the tacit assumption that, once all of the organised and mystified fictions have been unmasked, some other (and presumably better) principle or value may naturally emerge" (Dolan. 1991, p540).

The numerous narrative passages of Burroughs' fiction that assault the reader with an apocalyptic tenor are ultimately revealed as degrading into scenes of dystopian apocalyptic content. Here, apocalypse is immanent, as opposed to the imminence of the 'final' moment of true apocalyptic release. In Burroughs' fiction, apocalypse is never experienced as a singular moment, rather it is constantly in the process of coming into being. Thus the idea of apocalyptic denouement is subsumed by a notion of continual apocalyptic renewal of critical vision. Such a rejection of the notion of apocalyptic closure in favour of an

immanent apocalyptic mode of social critique (achieved via the process of defamiliarisation) is presented in Burroughs' novel *The Place of Dead Roads*. Here Burroughs criticises the social stasis occasioned by apocalyptic closure, making the somewhat Nietzschean assertion that, for the individual, continual revolution is necessary in order to prevent the ossification of resistance into a complacent surrender to the oppressive social structures of the past: "It is always war, Planet Earth is by its nature and function a battlefield. Happiness is a by-product of function in a battle context: hence the fatal error of utopians" (Burroughs 1994 c1983, p116-117). As David Ingram writes, "Reality is never simply a given in Burroughs' work, but must be constantly recreated in an ongoing struggle for the power of meaning-production" (Ingram 1996, p100). In William S. Burroughs' 1989 text 'Apocalypse', a similar possibility of immanent 'apocalyptic' renewal is seen as existing in a "disruption of reality" predicated on the destruction of art as a separate category and its elevation to the status of life through a repudiation of normative epistemological criteria of 'truth':

Consider an apocalyptic statement: 'Nothing is true, everything is permitted'—Hassan I Sabbah, the Old Man of the Mountain. Not to be interpreted as an invitation to all manner of unrestrained and destructive behaviour; that would be a minor episode, which would run its course. Everything is permitted *because* nothing is true. It is all make-believe, illusion, dream, art. When art leaves the frame, and the written word leaves the page, not merely the physical frame and page, but the frames and pages of assigned categories, a basic disruption of reality occurs. The literal realisation of art. Success will write 'apocalypse' across the sky. (Burroughs 1989a, p3)

Burroughs' understanding of the immanence of apocalypse thus amounts to a constant act of defamiliarisation, achieved by undermining normative constructions of 'truth' and thereby revealing the arbitrary nature of the control mechanisms of the system. This amounts to an insistence upon the moment of "the naked lunch, when the system would appear for what it is, fuelled by an unstoppable need to dominate and control" (Dolan 1991, p537).¹⁹⁶

The word 'apocalypse' derives from the Greek *apokálypsis*: to uncover, reveal or disclose. For postmodern fiction, the function of apocalyptic revelation is embodied in the project of constant defamiliarisation. It is precisely because of the 'open' form of the work of Burroughs and Pynchon that this task can be achieved, the interrogation of normative monological visions of reality leading to a pluralistic view of the universe, in which diverse and varied views of the world coexist. What is achieved by this act is the undermining of official history by insisting upon a field of discourse that allows for a number of varieties of dissent. The earlier work of Burroughs often expresses a desire to escape from the

¹⁹⁶ This understanding of the metaphor of the naked lunch, what Allen Ginsberg described in his poem 'On Burroughs' Work' as equivalent to "reality sandwiches" (Ginsberg 1985, p114) has been explained by Burroughs himself in the following manner: "The title means exactly what the words say: NAKED Lunch—a frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork" (Burroughs 1993 c1959, p7).

prisonhouse of history, the endless cycle involving slavery to the historical processes of mastery and subjugation that is characterised as "the old army game from here to eternity" (Burroughs 1979 c1973, p115), or what Timothy S. Murphy summarises as "Burroughs' theory of historical time as flat repetition without the possibility of novelty" (Murphy 1997, p134). In these works, the idea that "history is fiction" leads Burroughs to take a negative stance toward the operations of history (Burroughs 1964, p13). Here Burroughs insists that the only way to elude the negative power relations inherent in the span of human history is to escape into the infinite possibilities of outer space through the abolition of that which ties people to time, language:

All out of time and into space. Come out of time-word 'the' forever. Come out of the body-word 'thee' forever. There is nothing to fear. There is no thing in space. There is no word to fear. There is no word in space.
(Burroughs 1992 c1961, p162)

In later works, however, Burroughs acknowledges the liberating effect of rejecting the notion of a unified monological 'history' by opposing it with presentations of multiple histories. This is most evident in the trilogy of books *Cities of the Red Night*, *The Place of Dead Roads*, and *The Western Lands*, and Burroughs' final fictional work, *Ghost of Chance*. In *Ghost of Chance*, Burroughs insists upon the significance of the reality of multiple histories by presenting the almost unknown story of 'Captain Mission' (a renegade who established the free commune of Libertia in Madagascar and formulated a set of democratic Articles banning capital punishment, slavery, imprisonment for debt, and racial, religious and sexual discrimination) as a revolutionary Utopian vision that, for Burroughs, serves as an alternative/adjunct to the failed ideals of the French and American revolutions, which it predates by around sixty years. The early pages of *Cities of the Red Night* similarly present the story of Captain Mission and the phenomenon of the establishment of anarchist communes in the Americas during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Burroughs 1982 c1981, p9-12). As Burroughs notes, whilst the French and American revolutions have been given status as a formative influence of modern capitalist democracy, the limiting of historical knowledge to these 'authorised' revolutions has been at the expense of alternative revolutionary visions and has co-optively diverted the impulse to radical political freedom:

The principles of the French and American revolutions became windy lies in the mouths of politicians. The liberal revolution of 1848 created the so-called republics of Central and South America, with a dreary history of dictatorship, oppression, graft and bureaucracy, thus closing this vast, underpopulated continent to any possibility of communes along the lines set forth by Captain Mission. In any case South America would soon be crisscrossed by highways and motels. In England, Western Europe and America, the overpopulation made possible by the Industrial Revolution leaves scant room for communes, which are commonly subject to state and federal law and frequently harassed by the local inhabitants.
(Burroughs 1982 c1981, p11-12)

The revolutionary group that dominates the rebellious content of *Cities of the Red Night* states, "decentralisation is a keynote of our strategy" (Burroughs 1982 c1981, p135). As

well as referring to the decentralised modes of armed resistance (primarily guerrilla warfare) that the group utilises in opposition to particular modes of social control, resistance is also accomplished in Burroughs' work through a decentralised comprehension of history.¹⁹⁷

With their immense breath of eclectically displayed historical detail, Pynchon's works undermine monological notions of history in a similar fashion. The inclusion of such largely unknown or 'alternative' histories in Pynchon's work as the tales of the socially disinherited and oppressed peoples revealed during Oedipa's search for the Tristero in *The Crying of Lot 49*; the history of the rise and fall of Sixties counterculture presented by *Vineland*; the histories of post-war international espionage, South-West African cultural genocide and avant-garde art movements presented in *V.*; the multiple stories of inhabitants of 'the Zone' and the associated histories of psychic science, rocket science, chemical science and many more that take place in the closing years of World War II presented by *Gravity's Rainbow*; and the sheer weight of almost unbelievably fabulous eclectic historical detail in *Mason & Dixon* all function in destabilising monological notions of history, undercutting official history by opening up a wide field of multiple discourses that defamiliarise monological notions of history, particularly the idea of the inevitability of the historical progression toward contemporary capitalist democracy.

Earlier I showed the singularity of the paranoiac's vision of the conspiratorial connectedness of the world to be criticised by the postmodern novel as leading to such oppressive social circumstances as scapegoating. The existence of alternative views of history, on the other hand, opposes such monological notions of the singularity of reality. The production of multiple visions of history within the one text through the utilisation of the paranoid critical stance functions by destabilising monological views of reality. This pluralistic view of history is seen by Burroughs and Pynchon as providing the possibility for a radical liberation of individual perception and personal and historical experience. Presenting alternative views of history (and designating certain problems as due to a paranoid insistence upon singularity of meaning) thus opens up the processes of history to criticism through a diversity of interpretations. Against the monolithic conspiracies posited by the paranoid the postmodern American novel poses the power of a pluralistic view of history to liberate the individual from oppressive and restrictive views of reality. This opposition to 'official' visions of reality also relates to the fact that the most successful strategy of 'The Counterforce' in *Gravity's Rainbow* is its opposition to rationality: "'They're

¹⁹⁷ Burroughs' has often presented the Ancient Egyptian and Mayan civilisations as emblems of societal control, but at other times his work expresses an almost nostalgic longing for the rebellious outlaws of the past, his presentation of characters such as gangster Dutch Schultz and gunslinger Billy the Kid expressing the individual's harrowed rebellion against the forces of conformity and repressive control posed by society. See particularly (Burroughs 1986 c1969), (Burroughs 1994 c1983).

the rational ones. We piss on Their rational arrangements'" (GR, p639).¹⁹⁸ Burroughs, like Pynchon, criticises "the whole either-or proposition ... [the] Aristotelian construct [that] is one of the great shackles of Western Civilisation" (Burroughs 1986a, p89). His juxtapositionary narrative techniques constitute a deconstructive method of breaking this opposition down, undermining monological notions of reality and replacing them with ideas of multiplicity and synchronicity.

I have shown in previous sections that the postmodern novel's presentation of paranoia demands some sort of shaping of the chaotic matter of historical reality, some imposition of form upon ~~chaos~~^{chaosm} and that such shaping is presented as facing constantly the danger that one shape will be reified and made static with attendant horrendous results. The answer proposed by Burroughs and Pynchon would seem to lie in a view of the world that recognises its fictive elements. Such is presented in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* in the statement that metaphor (for which one may also read the act of interpretively and projectively constructing the world-creation of effective reality) is "a thrust at truth and a lie" (L49, p89). N. Katherine Hayles explains: "metaphors may be a thrust at truth because they hint at the constructed nature of reality; ... they are a lie because like any other language, they cannot penetrate the construction to touch reality as such" (Hayles 1991c, p116). A recognition of this ambivalent status of world-creations hence defies the most

¹⁹⁸ The idea of irrationality being a mode of opposition to the hegemony of 'official' versions of reality is extended in the work of Kathy Acker to incorporate the notion of 'madness' as a mode of liberating rebellion. In *Blood and Guts in High School*, social conformists are likened to robots: "Fight the dullness of shit society. Alienated robotized images. Here's your cooky ma'am. No to anything but madness" (Acker 1984 c1978, p35). This theme continues in the short work *I Become a Murderess*: "I'm weird, I'm not a robot.... I don't want anyone following me around, secretly gossiping about me, because I'm not a robot.... I can appear to be sane (a robot)" (Acker 1993 c1989, p211-213). Forms of mental illness, particularly schizophrenia, have been viewed by certain writers as a form of resistance to system. The association of schizophrenia with mystical visionary potential made by R.D. Laing (who according to Robert Jay Lifton, saw the schizophrenic as a "visionary who will teach us new ways of seeing, new forms of transcendence that will, so to speak, deliver us from our own psychic deaths" (Lifton 1998, p65)) has been mentioned in earlier sections. But it is worth noting here the peculiar political slant of Deleuze's and Guattari's formulation of schizophrenia made in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. The 'schizophrenia' of Deleuze and Guattari is not a pathological condition, but, according to Brian Massumi, is theorised as follows: "[T]he clinical schizophrenic's debilitating detachment from the world is a quelled attempt to engage it in unimagined ways" (Massumi 1992, p1). For Deleuze and Guattari, "[s]chizophrenia as a positive process is inventive connection, expansion rather than withdrawal" (Massumi 1992, p1). As Philip Goodchild writes, "Guattari links schizophrenia with political revolution by thinking of the latter as an 'ungluing' of dominant realities, in order to allow people to make their own territory as in the schizo process. For the signifying structures that shape thought and desires are effectively produced by machinic processes in society. The schizophrenic, who experiences this factory of desire directly in intensity, apart from signification, is therefore in touch with reality itself" (Goodchild 1996, p126, p126). Also notable on this topic is David Baxter's collection of poetry and short prose pieces entitled *The Essence of Paranoia*, which typecasts schizophrenia as a mode of resistance to paranoid social conformity. One article within the collection in particular, entitled 'An Interview with Essence (1)', asserts a notion of schizophrenia as a form of rebellion against the rigid, monological 'paranoid' strictures of contemporary life: "So they sent me to see someone. He said he could cure my illusions, my schizophrenia. I said I'd spent the last five years becoming a schizophrenic, the last thing I wanted was curing" (Baxter 1979).

dangerous possibilities of paranoia by utilising its positive potential to discriminate between varying world-creations. Jodi Dean states that "[p]aranoia responds to anxieties surrounding what can be assumed to be real or certain in today's high-tech televisual culture by reassuring us that out there somewhere, however hard to find, there is a stable, identifiable truth" (Dean 1998, p17-18); but the paranoid critical stance of the postmodern novel offers no such force of reassurance. Instead it insists upon the necessity of ~~constantly~~ ^{constantly} creating and critically reworking a plurality of 'truths'. As Nelson Goodman writes: "while readiness to recognise alternative worlds may be liberating, and suggestive of new avenues of exploration, a willingness to welcome all worlds builds none.... A broad mind is no substitute for hard work" (Goodman 1978, p21).

Appendix I.

In investigating examples in American fiction of group consolidation of identity accomplished through acts of paranoia and scapegoating, it is useful to trace the influences of what has been identified by many historians as the generative point of American identity: the religious outlook of the European Puritan pilgrims who colonised North America.

In *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Norman Cohn writes: "Precisely because they were so utterly certain of being the Chosen People, [the Jews] tended to react to peril, oppression and hardship by phantasies of the total triumph and boundless prosperity which Yahweh, out of his omnipotence, would bestow upon his Elect in the fullness of time" (Cohn 1970 c1957, p2). Cohn does not see this attitude as being restricted to those of the Jewish faith, however, mentioning the parallel reactions to persecution of the Christian community: "Like the Jews, the Christians suffered oppression and responded to it by affirming ever more vigorously, to the world and to themselves, their faith in the imminence of the messianic age in which their wrongs would be righted and their enemies cast down" (Cohn 1970 c1957, p7). The emphasis upon the casting down of enemies and the retributive punishment of the Other that permeated the discourse of the Christians was often provided by the assurance of victory granted by God to the faithful in the *Book of Revelation*. According to *Revelation*, the messianic age would involve an apocalyptic battle between the forces of light and darkness, after which a New Jerusalem would be let down from heaven to be a dwelling place for the Saints for ever:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.
(Revelations 21: 1-3)

Despite the fact that St. Augustine's definition ^{of Revelation as a spiritual allegory in his book} ~~in City of God of Revelation as a spiritual~~ ^{City of God} allegory¹⁹⁹ (which became orthodox doctrine to the extent that in 431 the Council of Ephesus condemned belief in the Millennium as an aberration), popular belief in the apocalyptic tradition was inextinguishable (Cohn 1970 c1957, p14). Christopher Columbus, the historical figure popularly credited with the discovery of America, himself adhered to a conviction in the literal truth of the events portrayed in *Revelation*. As Lois Parkinson Zamora writes:

¹⁹⁹ See particularly (Augustine 1972 c1467—book XX, ch. 7).

To convey to his royal patrons his conviction that his mission represented the fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecy, Christopher Columbus referred in letters and in his diary to passages from Revelation and Isaiah which describe the new heaven and new earth. So he immediately initiated what was to become a perennial imaginative association of America with the promise of apocalyptic historical renewal.

(Zamora 1982, p9)²⁰⁰

Luther's second preface to *Revelation*, written in 1545, returned the time-honoured historical interpretation of the prophetic element in the work. Luther himself concluded that he was living in the period of the last loosing of Satan, a belief for which he found evidence in, amongst other things, the sins of the papacy (May 1972, p26). When America came to be colonised by Protestant Puritans escaping from religious persecution in England, they too saw the new world of America as fulfilling the final requirements of God's millennial plan. These colonial Puritans saw America as "the new promised land, reserved by God for His new chosen people as the site for a new heaven and a new earth" (Bercovitch 1978, p8-9). As Robert Fuller summarises:

... Puritan Protestants saw themselves occupying a unique role in God's providential actions in history. It was they who had been chosen to construct an earthly kingdom where pure faith and righteous government would exist side by side. Their mission to erect a holy commonwealth could hardly be separated from a millennialist Biblical faith.... 'By God's good providence,' these defenders of the true faith had come to build a New Jerusalem in 'those vast and unpeopled countries of America, which are fruitful and fit for habitation.'

(Fuller 1995, p42)²⁰¹

Cohn's dictum that social change breeds mass paranoia²⁰² also seems to agree with this historical phenomenon. This is a view attested to by historian Richard Niebuhr, who writes:

Not only impatient expectation but also the sense of a crisis in time made the coming kingdom seem very real and very near. All around there were signs that the old order of life was passing; an ominous sense of catastrophe and an invigorating promise of newness of life were conveyed by the rumour of battles, of Roman decadence, or new worlds discovered, of novel ideas and inventions.

(Cited in (May 1972, p27))²⁰³

In 1630, the leader of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, wrote: "For wee must Consider that wee shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eies of all people are upon us" (cited in (Miller 1976 c1956, p11). This symbolically laden image of the city on a hill was taken

²⁰⁰ This point is further developed by Bernard McGinn's *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (McGinn 1979, p284-285) and is detailed in the *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus* (Columbus 1847, p196-198).

²⁰¹ For an extensive discussion of the recurring importance of *Revelation* to American conceptions of itself as a millennial nation, see particularly Marina Benjamin's *Living at the End of the World* (Benjamin 1998, p82-119).

²⁰² See particularly (Cohn 1970 c1957, p73-74).

²⁰³ On this topic, Cohn's further statement that it was particularly during times of uncertainty that "people were always apt to turn to the Book of Revelations and the innumerable commentaries upon it" is also noteworthy (Cohn 1970 c1957, p15).

from the New Testament ^{Gospel} ~~Book~~ of Matthew,²⁰⁴ in which Jesus delivers the parable of a city on a hill, symbolising a Christian community that is close to both heaven (indicating their favour with the Lord) and mankind (thereby demonstrating the power of God to the outside world):

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.
(Matthew 5: 13-16)

As the New England clergy connected religion and patriotic ideology in such a manner, representing the cause of America as the cause of heaven, the Puritans' emphasis upon manifesting the spiritual dimension in political reality blurred the distinction between historical and spiritual dimensions of meaning. In the last decades of the seventeenth-century, the friction between the millenarian promise of America and the pressing realisation of its seeming non-occurrence became increasingly problematic. As a result, the Puritan belief in America as the manifestation of New Jerusalem became incorporated into common sociopolitical discourse, rather than being a discrete mode of religious belief:

Insisting that the theocracy was the American chronometer, the ministers drained it of its discrete theological and institutional content. Intent on preserving the past, they transformed it (as legend) into a malleable guide to the future. Seeking to defend the Good Old Way, they abstracted from its antiquated social forms the larger, vaguer, and more flexible forms of symbol and metaphor (*new chosen people, city on a hill, Promised land, destined progress, New Eden, American Jerusalem*), and so facilitated the movement from visible saint to American patriot, sacred errand to manifest destiny, colony to republic to imperial power.
(Bercovitch 1978, p92)²⁰⁵

As Richard Niebuhr writes about the fate of the American tendency towards millenarian expectation:

It was nationalised, being used to support the feeling of national superiority and of manifest destiny. It was confused with the progress of industrial capitalism.... The old idea of American Christians as a chosen people who had been called to a special task was turned into the notion of a chosen nation especially favoured.
(Cited in (May 1972, p29))

The secular nationalisation of this millenarian belief is a central point of significance to what Dorothy Ross has defined as "the national ideology of American exceptionalism, the

²⁰⁴ This passage is also notably present in the Book of Mormon, the primary religious document of the American-born sect of Mormonism: "Verily, verily, I give unto you to be the light of this people. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Therefore, let you light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Third Book of Nephi, 12:14-16).

²⁰⁵ This sort of amalgamation of distinct categories of meaning is evident in the fact that the motto on every American dollar bill is *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (A New World Order). In particular, it is the ambiguity surrounding the question as to exactly *what* order this New World Order pertains to (be it political, religious, or historical) that evidences this blurring of categories.

idea that America occupies an exceptional place in history" (Ross 1991, pxiv). According to Ross, many of America's more egocentric definitions of itself partake in a deluded sense of identity: "While claiming to describe the American world as it was, exceptionalism instead distorted that world, providing a simplistic and idealised vision of the United States and exaggerating American uniqueness" (Ross 1991, pxviii). Recognisable manifestations of American exceptionalism are still prominent today. Heather Neilson's essay 'Big Words: Issues in American Self-Representation', for example, details the predominance of the phrase "the indispensable nation" in contemporary American political discourse, and examines its ideological implications (Neilson 1998). The endurance of this sort of rhetoric, what Martin Kryger has referred to as "the discourse of national narcissism" (Meier 1973, p426), offers testimony to the perseverance of American exceptionalism. Whilst certain phrases and the minor details of certain patriotic predilections may have changed, the essential posture is still the same. John Gray identifies a further manifestation of American exceptionalism in the "project of a single global market" which he argues "has succeeded in appropriating the American faith that it is a unique country, the model for a universal civilisation which all societies are fated to emulate" (Gray 1998, p104). As Gray writes:

Americans have long followed Thomas Jefferson in seeing themselves as 'the world's best hope'; but only lately has that hope been equated with the universal reach of free markets.... Only in the United States is the Enlightenment project of a global civilisation still a living political faith. During the Cold War this Enlightenment faith was embodied in American anti-communism. In the post-communist era it animates the American project of a universal free market. (Gray 1998, p100-101)

Herbert Marcuse has defined the results of this Puritan heritage as constituting the characteristically American ideological formation of 'radical Puritanism':

Men had to break through the whole system of ideas and values imposed on them, and to find and seize the ideas and values that conformed to their rational self-interest. They had to live in a state of constant vigilance, apprehension, and criticism, to reject everything that was not true, not justified by free reason. This, in a society that was not rational, constituted a principle of permanent unrest and opposition. (Marcuse 1988, p140)

This principle of permanent unrest and opposition mentioned by Marcuse finds expression in the numerous warnings and cautions advocated by the literature of the early Puritans. In such popular Puritan texts as Michael Wigglesworth's *Day of Doom* (more about which forthwith) and the religious tract 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God', written in 1741 by the millennial enthusiast and religious revivalist Jonathon Edwards, the individual is entreated to be ever vigilant in resisting the temptations offered by the devil and in embracing the will of God. In his 1696 work *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Cotton Mather (who, despite a firm personal belief in witches, warned against the hasty conviction of the Salem Villagers accused of witchcraft), explained that Satan was in the New World before the Puritans and had laid traps to snare them: "Molestations from evil spirits, ... have so

abounded in this country that I question whether any one town has been free from sad examples of them" (Mather 1974 c1702, p162). In *Wonders of the Invisible World*, Mather told of witchcraft in Salem in an attempt to demonstrate the sins of a world fallen from righteousness, warning: "I believe that never were more satanical devices used for the unsettling of any people under the sun than what have been employed for the extirpation of the vine which God has planted" (Mather 1974 c1692, p148).

One of the essential figures of the millennial vision is the Antichrist, the demonic Other who arises in *Revelation* as the arch-enemy in direct spiritual opposition to God and his followers. The identification of America with the providential land of God thus led to the search for the demonic counterpart implied by this position. As Robert Fuller attests:

Because [Americans] tend to view their nation as wilfully blessed by God, they have been especially prone to demonise their enemies. Throughout their nation's history, they have suspected that those who oppose the American way must be in league with the Antichrist's confederation of evil.... To this day, Americans retain the implicit faith that they are God's chosen nation. And also to this day, Americans show a tendency to demonise their enemies and view all that conspires to thwart their errand into the wilderness as somehow the subtle plot of the Antichrist.
(Fuller 1995, pp4-5, 44)²⁰⁶

The American historical tradition of didactic Puritan writings, cited by many as America's first enduring literary tradition, maintains a similarly discernible presence and influence upon contemporary American literature. Robert Fuller writes: "lay interest in the clergy's sermons made their publication and sale a profitable commercial enterprise and created their nation's first literary tradition" (Fuller 1995, p44). Michael Wigglesworth's mid-seventeenth-century epic, *The Day of Doom*, a versified account of the millennial day of judgement, is considered by many to be the first bestseller in the annals of the American book trade.²⁰⁷ In his review of Alfred Kazin's book *God and the American Writer*, Robert Stone demurs from this view, contending that Mary Rowlandson's 1682 work *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* was "America's first international best seller" (Stone 1998a, p25). The extended title of this work: *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed*, however, is sufficient to evidence the importance of Puritan conceptions of America's millennial future in the history of American literature, regardless of what work one regards as the 'first'. The prologue of Robert Coover's 1976 novel *The Public Burning* contains numerous allusions to American

²⁰⁶ On this point, see also Steffen Hantke's statement that "American history is believed to consist of a series of consecutive moments of crisis—to democracy, the free enterprise system, military dominance in a particular region, etc. Only in retrospect are lacunae in this frenzied process even discernible. Collective identity is incessantly challenged and therefore requires constant reinforcement through a rhetoric conjuring up the spectre of conspiracy" (Hantke 1994, p21).

²⁰⁷ Both John R. May and Perry Miller, for example, make this statement (May 1972, p27) (Miller 1976 c1956, p218).

exceptionalism and its millennial traditions. At one point in the work, George Washington is quoted as saying:

No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency!
(Coover 1978 c1976, p18)

In the same prologue, Coover ironically details "America's gradual unveiling as the New Athens, New Rome, and New Jerusalem all in one", stating: "The American Prophet S.D. Baldwin summed it up in a nutshell in the title of his 1854 classic: Armageddon: or the Overthrow of Romanism and Monarchy; the Existence of the United States Foretold in the Bible, Its Future Greatness; Invasion by Allied Europe; Annihilation by Monarchy; Expansion into the Millennial Republic, and Its Dominion over the Whole World" (Coover 1978 c1976, p18).²⁰⁸

Pynchon's novels similarly contain numerous references to America's Puritan heritage, relating these to literary concerns in particular. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa's paranoid quest is commented upon by other characters as being driven by a Puritanical attitude towards texts. As one character tells her: "'you're like Puritans are about the Bible'" (L49, p53). Later in the novel, Emory Bortz tells Oedipa: "'Remember that Puritans were utterly devoted, like literary critics, to the Word'" (L49, p107). The name of the character with whom Benny Profane ends the novel *V.*, Brenda Wigglesworth, contains a possible allusion to the author of *The Day of Doom*, Michael Wigglesworth. Similarly, Slothrop's Puritan heritage is insisted upon in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the text mentioning his "Puritan reflex of seeking other orders beyond the visible, also known as paranoia" (GR, p188). A later passage further links his Puritan heritage with this paranoid outlook: "Signs will find him ... and ancestors will reassert themselves ... his own WASPs in buckled black, who heard God clamouring to them in every turn of a leaf or cow loose among apple orchards in autumn" (GR, p281).

* * * * *

One of the most well-known American tales of persecution and scapegoating is Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1850 novel *The Scarlet Letter*. The protagonist of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne, was based upon the historically significant figure of Anne Hutchinson, who was the victim of persecution in her own time. In a very public trial occurring about five years before the 1640s setting of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hutchinson had been banished from the

²⁰⁸ Although Coover here is obviously using the title of this work as a source of humour, the point is also evidenced by E.G. White's decidedly less humorously entitled 1888 work *The Great Controversy*, a work of biblical interpretation that insists upon the millennial centrality of America in painstaking detail (White 1988 c1888).

Massachusetts Bay Colony of Boston for the potentially subversive tendency of her religious convictions.²⁰⁹ Hester's sin of adultery is made a similarly public affair in *The Scarlet Letter*, her punishment being the constant adornment of a scarlet letter 'A' upon her dress. The first display of the scarlet letter is at a public meeting at the village marketplace, a fate commented upon by the town beadle as "'[a] blessing on the righteous colony of Massachusetts, where iniquity is dragged out into the sunshine!'" (Hawthorne 1971 c1850, p68). Later in the novel, a townsman comments to a newly arrived stranger (who is actually Hester's husband concealing his identity), "it must gladden your heart, after your troubles and sojourn in the wilderness ... to find yourself at length in a land where iniquity is searched out and punished in the sight of rulers and people" (Hawthorne 1971 c1850, p77). The implication of such statements is that it is the public display of the punitive act, the act of revealing private iniquity to the communal eye, which is efficacious. The fact that Hester is branded an adulterer in order for all the community to see allows, and in fact compels, the community to recognise their fears in this village scapegoat and to projectively disown them.²¹⁰ After the installation of the scarlet letter, the novel states, "A mystic shadow of suspicion immediately attached itself to the spot", and children, "discerning the scarlet letter upon her breast, would scamper off with a strange contagious fear" (Hawthorne 1971 c1850, p100). This not only evidences Hester's role as a scapegoat, but further elucidates this role as that of the marked deviant, the outsider to be avoided at all costs lest the evil that taints her come to infect the innocent. This infectious evil is judged by the community as hereditarily imbuig the child of Hester's adulterous union, who bears further public witness to her status as demonised deviant. At one point in the novel, Hester remembers "the talk of the neighbouring townspeople, who, seeking vainly elsewhere for the child's paternity, and observing some of her odd attributes, had given out that poor little Pearl was a demon offspring" (Hawthorne 1971 c1850, p121).

Set in 1692, roughly fifty years after *The Scarlet Letter*, Henry Miller's play *The Crucible* was first produced in 1953, a period of American national hysteria over Senator Joseph McCarthy's war on the political heretics of the day: communists. It is interesting to note that an introduction to a 1959 edition of the play still finds this association with ideological

²⁰⁹ Hutchinson is referred to by name in the first chapter of *The Scarlet Letter* (Hawthorne 1971 c1850, p60). For more information on Hutchinson see *The Journal of John Winthrop* (Winthrop 1974 c1638), in particular see the entries for 21st October 1636, 1st November 1637, and 22nd March 1638. Interestingly enough, in Shirley Jackson's short story 'The Lottery', the character upon whom the role of sacrificial scapegoat eventually falls is a Mrs Hutchinson (Jackson 1983 c1948, p486).

²¹⁰ It also allows Hester's co-adulterer Dimmesdale to interpretatively project his sin upon the outside universe. The giant letter 'A' that he believes he sees inscribed upon the night sky is a symbol that not only signifies his own guilt to Dimmesdale, but that also indicates to the reader how much Dimmesdale's solipsistic introspection has consumed his vision of the world around him. As Hawthorne writes, "In such a case, it could only be the symptom of a highly disordered mental state, when a man, rendered morbidly self-contemplative by long, intense, and secret pain, had extended his egoism over the whole expanse of nature, until the firmament itself should appear no more than a fitting page for his soul's history and fate" (Hawthorne 1971 c1850, p187).

opposition to anti-communism uncomfortable. Despite the realisation that *The Crucible* "is less dramatic realism than it is modern morality play", Richard Watts, Jr.'s introduction states on numerous occasions that the analogical alliance between the Salem vilification of supposed 'witches' and the McCarthyist situation is "of distracting importance", and that the play should be judged "unhampered by distracting topical questions" (Watts 1959, ppx, xiv, xii). According to Watts, "with nothing to distract the attention by *forcing* on it those parallels with one especial case of national yielding to the hysteria of witch-hunting, 'The Crucible' can be judged for what it is, a moving drama about the personal tragedy of the notorious Salem trials" (Watts 1959, px—my emphasis). At one point in the text, Watts goes so far as to suggest that, although the similarities between the Salem witch-trials and the virulent anti-communist vilification of McCarthy may be notable, "the danger from Russian subversion was a more believable menace than the witch cults of pioneer Massachusetts" (Watts 1959, pxii).²¹¹ Against this attempt at a supposedly 'ideologically unhampered' reading of the play is Miller's (understandably quite bitter²¹²) statement, in the text itself, "[I]n America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell" (Miller 1959 c1952, p31).

The central role of paranoia in *The Crucible* is undeniable. The author's introduction to Act One states that the character Reverend Parris: "believed he was being persecuted wherever he went", and that the inhabitants of Salem "carried about an air of innate resistance, even of persecution" (Miller 1959 c1952, pp1, 3). Furthermore, the paranoid persecution complex of Reverend Parris emerges at the very beginning of Act One, where Parris insists upon the existence of his 'enemies': "It must come out—my enemies will bring it out.... Abigail, do you understand that I have many enemies?" (Miller 1959 c1952, p8). Later in Act One, Parris tellingly poses the rhetorical question:

I do not fathom it, why am I persecuted here? I cannot offer one proposition but there be a howling riot of argument. I have often wondered if the Devil be in it somewhere; I cannot understand you people otherwise.
(Miller 1959 c1952, p27)

The author's introduction to Act One makes an insightful analysis of the effects of the prevailing social and political instabilities upon the people of Salem, alluding to a partial explanation for such paranoia as is exhibited by Reverend Parris:

The times, to their eyes, must have seemed out of joint, and to the common folk must have seemed as insoluble and complicated as do ours today. It is not hard to see how easily many could have been led to believe that the time of confusion had been brought upon them by deep and darkling forces. No hint of any speculation appears on the court record, but social disorder in any age breeds such mystical

²¹¹ Although the fear of Russian subversion may seem more rational than the fear of witches to a conservative 1950s American audience, the late-seventeenth-century community of Salem Village would certainly not hold the same view. To a contemporary audience, both views might seem to contain an element of paranoid irrationality.

²¹² Miller himself became the target of the anti-communist witch-hunt on a number of occasions.

suspensions, and when, as is Salem, wonders are brought forth from below the social surface, it is too much to expect people to hold back very long from laying on the victims with all the force of their frustrations.
(Miller 1959 c1952, p4)

Historical interpretations of the Salem witch-trials of 1692 insist that a crisis in the nature of the Salem community played a large part in causing the ensuing troubles. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissbaum, for example, maintain that Salem Village was symbolic of the social tension facing many late-seventeenth-century New England communities. The residents were divided by three main socioeconomic factors—church membership, wealth, and geological proximity to commercial enterprises (i.e. Salem Town):

To underestimate the intensity of these divisions, we must recognise the fact—self-evident to the men and women of Salem Village—that what was going on was not simply a personal quarrel, an economic dispute, or even a struggle for power, but a mortal conflict involving the very nature of the community itself. The fundamental issue was not who was to control the Village, but what its essential character should be.
(Boyer 1974, p103)

Like Boyer's and Nissbaum's interpretation of the event, Miller's emphasis on the social confusion that reigned in Salem Village supports Norman Cohn's belief that mass paranoia arises as a result of times of confusing cultural change. Further supporting this idea is Miller's statement that the witch-hunt was not simply an instance of social repression, but also "a long overdue opportunity for everyone so inclined to express publicly his guilt and sins, under the cover of accusations against the victims" (Miller 1959 c1952, p5). As is the case in *The Scarlet Letter*, the need for the negative elements of the village, characterised in typically Puritan fashion as 'sin' and 'guilt', to be confessed (and expiated) in an overtly public fashion is insisted upon by the end of *The Crucible*. After the innocent John Proctor is accused of witchcraft and is forced to privately confess to Reverend Parris and Judge Danforth in order to save his life, he is given the final ultimatum: confess publicly or die. Danforth refuses to recognise any confession not witnessed by the entire Salem community. At this point in the play, Parris, responding to Proctor's statement that he had confessed to God and that this should more than suffice, blurts out: "Proctor, the *village* must have proof that—" (Miller 1959 c1952, p136—my emphasis). In a later author's comment, Miller insists that "[t]hese people have no ritual for the washing away of sins" (Miller 1959 c1952, p18). Thus the interpretation of the Salem witch-trials proffered by *The Crucible* seems to lead one toward the notion that its victims were scapegoats, the sins of the community invested in their fictional crimes and disposed of via their persecution. As Tom Douglas argues, this is a common occurrence:

Where ignorance of the actual causes of distress and harm exists, then human beings inevitably seek for an explanation. It is as if individuals, groups and communities cannot tolerate or live with events that are apparently inexplicable. Thus, when such events occur no relief, no cleansing can take place until some acceptable explanation can be found.
(Douglas 1995, p41)

To this we might add that not only must an explanation be found, but a cause for this trouble must be publicly accepted, taking the form of human agents. In Miller's play, the simplistic conspiratorial explanation provided by the inhabitants of Salem Village in order to rationalise the crisis leaves little doubt as to who are the forces of good and who are the agents of evil. The collective action taken against those provocateurs defined as satanic enemies of the village is seen by the villagers not only as a form of punitive recrimination or retributive justice, but also as an attempt to hold the village community together. Thus the events of Salem Village can be seen as relating to a range of socio-cultural factors that primarily concern not only the nature of community definition, but also the ideal of community cohesion. The witch-hunt of Salem was a reaction not only to the changing face of Salem life, but also to the division of the Salem community.

An unmistakable distinction that exists between the persecution/scapegoating narratives set in the mid- to late-seventeenth-century (such as *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Crucible*) and those set in the Cold War period, is the earlier texts' insistence upon the danger presented by the chaos of nature. In *The Scarlet Letter*, a siege mentality surrounds the "little town, on the edge of the Western wilderness" in a "wild outskirts of the earth" (Hawthorne 1971 c1850, pp72, 94). Attempting to barricade itself against both the literal wilderness and the metaphorical dangers of a moral wilderness, the town is figured as an outpost of civilisation amid unregenerate chaos, buttressed by God's law against the threat of satanic encroachment by fallen nature. Despite the fact that the initial production of *The Crucible* took place in 1953, the threat presented by the wild forces of encroaching chaotic lawless nature is similarly emphasised in much of Miller's commentary to the text:

The edge of wilderness was close by. The American continent stretched endlessly west, and it was full of mystery for them. It stood, dark and threatening, over their shoulders day and night ... and the Salem folk believed that the virgin forest was the Devil's last preserve, his home base and the citadel of his final stand.
(Miller 1959 c1952, p3)

What gives the Salem inhabitants their initial fear of witchcraft in the play is the discovery of a group of young girls dancing in the forest. The forest thus figures in the play as an area overtly associated with untamed, primitive nature. This is accomplished by associating the forest with the Negro slave Tituba, who is presented as a former inhabitant of the dark voodoo-ridden primal land of Barbados. Just as the forest is the setting for the breaking of religious taboos and the girls' initial fall from grace in *The Crucible*, the wilderness represented by the forest is also the setting for the adulterous fall from grace of Hester Prynne and Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*. This fear of the wilderness's threateningly encroaching on the defensive boundaries of colonial settlements arises from certain Puritans' belief that America was inhabited by the devil before they arrived on its shores. This belief was spurred on by many Puritans' viewing the Native Americans who freely inhabited the land before the violent interventions of colonial powers as the spawn of the devil. According to Jack D. Forbes, whilst the first Europeans in America possessed no

single 'image' of the Native American, many Puritans came to view "the native as a 'Tawny Serpent' of the Devil", believing "that the American natives were worshipping Satan when they prayed to their own deities" (Forbes 1964, p15). This notion was further augmented by the idea, popularised by Dutch Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel and further disseminated amongst the European and American Puritan populations by, respectively, the Englishmen chaplain John Dury and Reverend Thomas Thorowgood, that "the Lost Tribes [of Israel] were to be found in the New World ... and that they were getting ready for their appearance in the imminent Final Days" (Sanders 1978, p367). Ronald Sanders states that this idea "was bound to be of particular appeal to an English Puritanism that not only was reaching a hysterical pitch but was keenly aware of its own special relationship with the American continent" (Sanders 1978, p367). Literary provocation was further provided by the 1650 publication of Thorowgood's book, *Jews in America, or, Probabilities that those Indians Are Judaical* (Sanders 1978, p369). Cotton Mather himself commented unfavourably on this belief, alluding to Thorowgood in his denigrating statement that he "saw some learned men looking for the lost Israelites among the Indians in America, and counting that they had thorow-good reasons for doing so" (cited in (Sanders 1978, p368)). Nevertheless, Mather himself viewed the Puritans as inhabiting what was previously the devil's territory. Mather's *The Wonders of the Invisible World* details: "The New Englanders are a people of God settled in those which were once the devil's territories, and may easily be supposed that the devil was exceedingly disturbed when he perceived such a people here accomplishing the promise of old made unto our blessed Jesus, that He should have the utmost parts of the earth for his possession" (Mather 1974 c1692, p148).

Precisely because of their belief in their position as the elect of God, the Puritans saw themselves as bringing light to a darkness that surrounded them on all sides. In *The Journal of John Winthrop*, for example, the entry for the fifth of July 1632 describes a battle between a snake and a mouse in which the mouse won. These foes were interpreted by Winthrop as representing respectively the devil and "a poor contemptible people, which God had brought thither, which should overcome Satan here, and dispossess him of *his* kingdom" (Winthrop 1974 c1638, p63—my emphasis). The Puritan conception of God was that he had created the world out of chaos, and that this process of establishing order was continuous; its abandonment by God would permit chaos to reassert its sway in the universe. Order was seen as a spiritual outpost against the primordial demonic threat presented by nature. Threats to public morality concomitantly threatened to rupture the order of the entire community, allowing the godless chaos of unregenerate nature to spill through and destroy their lives. In contrast, by the time of the Cold War, manifest destiny had long ago run its course, the country having been completely traversed and bounded years earlier. More relevant was the global containment of the satanic forces of communism, unleashed upon the world in the early years of the twentieth-century and now seen as threatening the boundaries of the American empire from both without and within.

In both cases, however, the possibility of the restoration of social order was often seen to lie in the demonisation and persecution of scapegoats.

According to Tom Douglas, the origins of the word 'scapegoat' are traceable to the Protestant William Tynsdale's early-sixteenth-century English translation of the Bible, made prior to his being burnt at the stake by the Catholic establishment in 1536 (Douglas 1995, p6-7). When an English translation of the Bible was undertaken in 1538, it was largely based upon Tynsdale's translation but was credited to Thomas Matthew in order to prevent charges of heresy. Nevertheless, a great deal of Tynsdale's version of the Bible is now to be found in the authorised King James Bible. Tynsdale's reading of a particular section of *Leviticus*: "But the goat, on which the lot fell to be scapegoat, shall be presented alone before the Lord, to make an atonement with him and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness" (*Leviticus* 16: 10) shows his invention of the word 'scapegoat' to express what he felt was the literal meaning of the Hebrew word 'azazel', which has accrued several meanings over the centuries. In Islamic demonology, Azazel is the counterpart of the Devil, cast out of heaven for refusing to worship Adam (Brewer 1978, p62). In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the devil Azazel is portrayed as the standard bearer of Satan's legions:

Then strait commands that at the warlike sound
Of trumpets loud and clarions be upreard
His mighty standard; that proud honour claim'd
Azazel as his right, a Cherube tall:
Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurl'd
Th' Imperial Ensign, . . .
(Milton 1989 c1968, book 1, lines 531-536)

E.C. Brewer relates the word 'azazel' to the scapegoat ritual practised among the early Hebrews for the Day of Atonement laid down by Mosaic Law: "two goats were brought to the alter of the Tabernacle and the high priest cast lots, one for the Lord and the other for Azazel. The Lord's goat was sacrificed, the other was the scapegoat; and the high priest having, by confession, transferred his own sins and the sins of the people to it, it was taken to the wilderness and suffered to *escape*" (Brewer 1978, p62—my emphasis) The purpose of this ritual was to cleanse the community of its sins, symbolically transferring them to the body of an animal that was then cast out into the wilderness. Tom Douglas writes: "The scapegoat ritual was essentially a process of purification, which means in essence that its practitioners felt that they were contaminated by the transgressions of their daily lives and that the ritual of scapegoating was one that would effectively disperse that contamination

and reinstate them as clean in their own eyes and, more importantly, in the eyes of their god" (Douglas 1995, p14).

The process of scapegoating was thus a recognisably communal act of atonement that traditionally took place in communities marked by a certain homogeneity in their customs and belief systems. Such a ritual is evident in Shirley Jackson's 1948 short story 'The Lottery' (Jackson 1983 c1948). In this rather Gothic story, set in a small village somewhere in America, a sacrificial scapegoat is picked at random (literally by a lottery) and is then stoned to death according to unquestioned village tradition, and despite the almost total encroachment of twentieth-century technology and culture on village life. The arbitrary nature of the selection of the scapegoat in this story emphasises the distinction between the earlier conceptions of scapegoating discussed above and a more contemporary understanding of the term, referring to the person or group of people who are *singled out* to carry the blame for negative circumstances. Despite such differences, the communal nature of scapegoating applies in both cases.

The symbolic process of the transference of sin contains the implication that sins could be transferred from the unclean scapegoat to whomever came into contact with it. From such a belief arises the association of sin and evil with the contagious power of infectious diseases.²¹³ Of further relevance to this association is the fact that many examples of mass paranoid scapegoating reveal the phenomenon to exhibit many of the characteristic features of both hysterical contagion and moral panic. Hysterical contagion is defined by the famous 'June Bug' study of Alan C. Kerckhoff and Kurt W. Back as being "[a] case ... in which a set of experiences or behaviours which are heavily laden with the emotion of fear of a mysterious force are disseminated through a collectivity" (Kerckhoff 1968, p25). Despite the imprecision inherent in this definition, the emphasis laid upon the collective, social nature of hysterical contagion is of vital importance. Hysterical contagion is further defined by Smelser as a socially communicated fear that projectively empowers "an ambiguous element in the environment with a generalised power to threaten or destroy" (Smelser 1963, p27). Far from being a generalised fear, according to Smelser, in cases of

hysterical contagion "it must be transformed into fear of a specific threatening agent" (Smelser 1963, p147). The authors of the 'June Bug' study similarly refer to a Freudian-influenced (though ultimately more complex) style of projective displacement of anxieties upon an object of 'hysterical' (or conspiratorial) belief:

The hysterical belief ... serves to objectify the source of a pervasive sense of discomfort and tension. It gives meaning to the dissatisfaction associated with the sources of strain.... If some external source of threat is thus 'invented', it can solve that part of the problem the people face. Since such a belief is motivated by strong needs for understanding and relief from tension, it is likely to be adopted avidly. (Kerckhoff 1968, p31)

As Eric Goode and Nachman Ben-Yahuda write, "Moral panics are likely to clarify the normative contours and moral boundaries of the society in which they occur, demonstrate that there are limits to how much diversity can be tolerated in a society" (Goode 1994, p29). The factors that motivate incidents of moral panic are thus parallel to those shown to operate in instances of scapegoating. Just as Norman Cohn argues that social instability leads to paranoia and witch-hunting, Goode and Ben-Yehuda state:

... moral panics serve as a mechanism for simultaneously strengthening and redrawing society's moral boundaries—that line between morality and immorality, just where one leaves the territory of good and enters that of evil.... when the moral boundaries are fuzzy and shifting and often seem to be contested, moral panics are far more likely to seize the members of a society. (Goode 1994, p52)

Belief in conspiracy is itself often regarded as almost virus-like, contagiously infecting those who come into contact with it. Robins and Post evidence such a view:

Just as adults who have been abused as children may themselves become abusers, groups that have suffered from the paranoid behaviour of others are especially at risk from the 'virus' from their tormentors. (Robins 1997, p61)

Metaphorically, paranoia is an infectious disease. The objects of the paranoid message are as likely to be infected as to be resistant. (Robins 1997, p188)

Susan Sontag's extended essay *Illness as Metaphor* examines this sort of use of language, noting that the metaphors of both cancer and infectious diseases have a widespread function as "a common figure for social disorder" (Sontag 1987 c1977, p63). According to Sontag, "[i]llnesses have always been used as metaphors to enliven charges that a society was corrupt or unjust.... Disease imagery is used to express concern for social order" (Sontag 1987 c1977, p76). Sontag notes the fact that renegade psychologist Wilhelm Reich persistently used cancer as a metaphor for the ills of the modern era (Sontag 1987 c1977, p64), defining it as "a disease following emotional resignation—a bio-energetic

²¹³ On this topic, see also chapter eight of Robert K.G. Temple's abridgement of James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (Frazer 1996 c1950, p129-152).

shrinking, a giving up of hope" (Sontag 1987 c1977, p27). According to Reich, "[p]sychic health depends upon orgasmic potency, i.e., upon the degree to which one can surrender to and experience the climax of excitation in the natural sex act" (Reich 1973 c1947, p6).²¹⁴ Sontag takes issue with this sort of uncritical use of cancer/viral metaphors, targeting "cancerphobes like Norman Mailer, who recently explained that had he not stabbed his wife (and acted out 'a murderous nest of feeling') he would have gotten cancer and 'been dead in a few years himself'" (Sontag 1987 c1977, p27). According to Sontag, this sort of use of the disease metaphor follows the logic: "if it is plausible to compare the polis to an organism, then it is plausible to compare civil disorder to an illness" (Sontag 1987 c1977, p80).²¹⁵ Thus the vivid imagery of bodily cancer, "[c]ells without inhibitions, cancer cells will continue to grow and extend over each other in a 'chaotic' fashion, destroying the body's normal cells, architecture and functions" (Sontag 1987 c1977, p67), leads to its coming into the service of paranoid rhetoric:

... cancer is the disease of the Other. Cancer proceeds by a science-fiction scenario: an invasion of 'alien' or 'mutant' cells, stronger than normal cells (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, *The Blob*, *The Thing*). One standard science-fiction plot is mutation, either mutants arriving from outer space or accidental mutations among humans. Cancer could be described as a triumphant mutation, and mutation is now mainly an image for cancer.... Cancer is now in the service of a simplistic view of the world that can turn paranoid. The disease is often experienced as a form of demonic possession—tumours are 'malignant' or 'benign', like forces—and many terrified cancer patients are disposed to seek out faith healers, to be exorcised. (Sontag 1987 c1977, p71-73)

²¹⁴ Reich was certainly not the first to propose theories such as this. The famous Ancient Greek physician Galen, for example, believed that a male form of hysteria (a malady commonly seen by the Ancient Greeks as being caused by the womb) appeared as a result of the retention of semen due to excessive sexual abstinence (Siegel 1968, p319-320). Also notable on this point is one of William Blake's 'Proverbs of Hell' in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence"

²¹⁵ Also notable on this point is Norman Mailer's statement, made during his criticism of "American totalitarianism", that "totalitarianism is better understood if it is regarded as a plague rather than examined as a style of ideology" (Mailer 1963b, p190).

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